

Multilateral Consultation

'A united front in international negotiations'



Multilateral Consultation

'A united front in international negotiations'

Fact sheet from the portfolio of the department of Trade and Industry version January 2008

Status

Worldwide consultation is conducted on an ongoing basis. The further liberalisation of world trade is currently being reviewed. Once this review has been completed towards the beginning of 2008, new trade conditions will be established.

Facts and figures

- The Netherlands is a distribution country and a point of access to an internal European market of 450 million consumers.
- The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was replaced by the WTO in 1995, the year in which international trade disciplines were applied to agricultural products and foods.
- When it was established in 1947 GATT had 23 members. The WTO currently has 151 members.

Period

Ongoing

Parties involved

The Department of International Affairs is ultimately responsible, Trade and Industry is involved specifically from the point of view of agribusiness, the Ministries of Economic Affairs (EZ) and Foreign Affairs (Development Cooperation), LEI.

More information

Ministry of Agriculture,
Nature and Food Quality
Department of Trade and Industry
Jean Rummenie
telephone +31 (0)70 378 41 28
e-mail j.f.rummenie@minlnv.nl



The Dutch market is governed by EU (agricultural) policy and worldwide trade agreements. Relevant reforms and agreements in the agro sector are closely followed with a view to monitoring commercial trade interests in multilateral negotiations. WTO consultations focus on three cornerstones in the liberalisation of world trade: the phasing out of export support, making internal support less disruptive to trade and the improvement of market access.

Context

The WTO establishes the conditions for the world trade of tomorrow. Export subsidies and import tariffs affect the competitiveness and the export position of the processing industry. In the Netherlands the processing sector is now growing more rapidly than the primary sector. It is therefore important to promote the interests of the Dutch food industry in international trade consultations. Together with the further liberalisation of world trade, other priorities include the creation of a level playing field ('people, planet, profit'), making use of the possibilities for innovation within the Lisbon process, the use of structural funds for the chain as a whole, and getting the internal market to operate more effectively.

Effects

Agribusinesses are informed of the developments and encouraged to offer their own input in the business sector consultation on multilateral negotiation. As a tangible result of this collaboration, a Doha tool was developed which clarifies the effects that the proposals at hand would have for all tariff lines. The offensive and defensive interests arising from the multilateral business sector consultation are clearly communicated to Brussels and Geneva. This applies not only to WTO negotiations, but to all bilateral and regional negotiations. Studies relevant to agribusiness (such as the Agriculture Economic Institute (LEI) study on barriers to trade for selected export products and a market access study) are conducted.

Particular aspects

The Department of Trade and Industry is a serious dialogue partner for agribusinesses and is actively involved in the Netherlands' negotiations within the EU, OECD and the WTO. A milestone was reached, now all of the sugar interests of the primary sector and the processing sector – first grade and second grade – are taken into account.

Challenges

International trade needs to be made more sustainable as a point of principle: the WTO is profit-oriented. Besides being concerned with working conditions and protection of the environment, the Ministry also regards animal welfare as a key objective.

Compatibility with Ministry policy

The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and Trade and Industry have both devoted increasing attention to multilateral collaboration in recent years. Trade and Industry is good at identifying 'offensive interests' in multilateral contexts. This strengthens the competitive position of Dutch agribusiness and prevents the Department from focusing purely on 'defensive interests'.

Benefits

The business sector is kept informed and can also contribute information. Knowledge of the forces at play helps to strengthen the sector's competitive position. LEI analyses the threats and/or opportunities posed by reduced tariffs.