

Committee on Agriculture
Special Session

Original: English

FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE 15-17 NOVEMBER 2000

Statement by Jamaica

Non-Trade Concerns (G/AG/NG/W/36)

Jamaica welcomes the paper G/AG/NG/W/36 Rev.1 tabled by a number of countries on non-trade concerns (NTC) and sees this paper as an attempt to focus and direct discussions on an issue which is of primary importance to all WTO members. The fact that the paper is sponsored by a wide cross section of countries of varying sizes and economies is an indication of the importance of the subject referred to as non-trade concerns.

While there seems to be no definition on NTCs in the document, the elements identified are fundamental to discussions within the WTO on the process of reform within the framework of Article 20 of the Agreement on Agriculture. Jamaica can identify with a number of these elements and supports "fully" this document as the basis for further discussions and formulation of multilaterally agreed principles on NTC

The elements I refer to include food security, rural development, source of employment, land use function. As an agricultural economy Jamaica sees the agricultural sector as a very important sector for socio-economic development. Agriculture provides **22 per cent** of direct employment in Jamaica.

If one were to examine the two main agricultural industries (sugar and banana) in Jamaica we would see clearly the key role these sectors play as an axis on which economic activities revolve and their contribution to rural development.

In the EC's paper on Agriculture's Contribution to Rural Development, pages 14 and 15, paragraphs 13 and 16 capture some of the concerns of small island economies which are dependent on a few crops and have limited opportunities to diversify in or outside of farming activities due to limited skills and geographical constraints such as remoteness and difficulty of terrain.

Size and remoteness however do not mean that farmers in small economies like Jamaica do not react to rapid economic decline in the agriculture sector, as do their counterparts in Europe and other parts of the world.

The threat to social and political stability due to major negative changes in the agricultural sector is therefore a shared non-trade concern (page 16, paragraphs 25 and 28).

Jamaica, in the formulation of rules on agricultural reform, also identifies with the view that certain flexibility is needed especially for developing countries to allow for the promotion of rural development and not just social and political but also economic stability.

The Food Security Paper by Japan and the Republic of Korea essentially covers the concerns by countries for access to basic food to meet the dietary needs of one's population. Paragraphs 39 and 40 on page 24 make the linkages between this non-trade concern and trade concerns and points to a situation where food security could be held hostage due to conflict of interests on non-trade concerns among exporting and importing countries. These are the points raised under section 4 and pages 28-29.

A desirable International Framework to ensure Food Security is sound basis for further deliberations within the Special Session of the Committee on Agriculture.

With respect to the paper on developing countries and NTC by Mauritius, Jamaica supports the views expressed there regarding the role the agricultural sector plays in the economy of a country and views expoused in paragraph 12 (page 44) on the necessity to deal with trade liberalization to ensure a meaningful and equitable outcome.

In fact, one of the challenges that Jamaica has seen and experienced within the WTO is how to marry developmental objectives expressed in the preamble to the Marrakesh Agreement, with that of trade liberalization.

In the paper by Norway dealing with flexibility in national policy to address NTC, Jamaica believes the suggestions given for consideration in section 5, pages 63-64 are worthy of further development and some of these are synonymous with positions already expressed in a number of proposals.

Jamaica shares the view that there is a need to define flexibility so it does not become a tool for further protectionist or trade distorting measures.

Jamaica observes that one dimension not fully reflected in six NTC papers discussed in Norway relates to acute vulnerability of the agricultural sector as a result of trade liberalization measures undertaken autonomously under structural adjustment programmes. This has already had severe repercussions on the farming agricultural sector. Further liberalization aggravates the domestic situation.

In closing, Jamaica reiterates its support for the elements outlined in this document, and in the process of examining the six papers in more detail and concurs with views expressed that they should form the basis for further discussions (while they were not tabled as negotiating positions). We note that NTCs are also touched on in the CAIRNS proposals G/AG/NG/W/35.
