

**PREPARATIONS FOR THE 1999 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**

Agriculture

*Communication from Korea*

The following communication, dated 12 April 1999, has been received from the Permanent Mission of Korea.

---

**Background**

Article 20 of the Agreement on Agriculture provides that the next negotiations shall take into account several factors, including *inter alia* the experience of implementing the commitments for reducing support and protection, the effects of reduction commitments on world trade, non-trade concerns and special and differential treatment to developing countries.

Despite considerable domestic difficulties, Korea has faithfully implemented its commitments under the Agreement on Agriculture. Based on its experience and from the perspective of a net food-importing country with unfavourable agricultural conditions, Korea makes the following suggestions with regard to the next negotiations on agriculture.

**Suggestions**

- 1. The basic framework of the Agreement on Agriculture should be maintained so that the reform process can move forward in a consistent manner.**

The goal of the next round of negotiations as defined in Article 20 of the Agreement on Agriculture is to continue with the reform process. In order to carry out the reforms on a consistent basis Members must refrain from bringing radical changes to the Agreement and seek to maintain its key elements. The following elements are particularly important to Korea:

- Market access: the key elements of tariffication mechanism such as tariff equivalents, tariff quotas, and special safeguards.
- Domestic support: the underlying spirit of establishing amber, green and blue boxes and their integral elements such as total AMS, relevant criteria and *de minimis* level.

**2. In pursuing the reforms, a flexible and gradual approach should be taken to ensure the participation of all countries.**

The Agreement on Agriculture introduced a set of disciplines into agricultural trade. As the disciplines did not fully reflect the unique nature of agriculture, especially the diverse conditions for agriculture, some Members had considerable difficulties in implementing their commitments under the Agreement. Ensuring the participation of all Members is essential to a viable reform process. Members must take a flexible and gradual approach that can accommodate the special nature of agriculture, keeping in mind the need to pursue the reforms in a consistent way.

In Korea's view, the following areas particularly call for a more flexible and gradual approach:

- Market access: tariff reductions and TRQ administration.
- Domestic support: reductions in total AMS and criteria for green box measures.

**3. In order to achieve a balance of interests among Members, provisions on non-trade concerns and special and differential treatment to developing countries should be strengthened.**

The Agreement on Agriculture does not fully take into account the non-trade concerns and the special requirements of small-scale subsistence agriculture. As a result, it has failed to achieve a balance of interests between exporting and importing countries and between the developed and developing countries. The balance is tipped against developing countries and importing countries, which is highly undesirable. Sound reforms cannot continue at the expense of a particular group of countries.

Korea makes the following suggestions to alleviate the difficulties of the developing countries and importing countries:

- Non-trade concerns, especially the multifunctionality of agriculture and food security should be fully taken into account in continuing the reform process.
  - Ways to make the provisions on special and differential treatment of developing countries more operational should be devised. In particular, more attention should be given to the important role that governments can play in achieving this goal.
  - Disciplines against arbitrary export restrictions should be developed.
-