

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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General Council

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PREPARATIONS FOR THE 1999 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Negotiations on Agriculture

Objective and Overall Framework for the Agriculture Negotiations

Communication from the United States

The following communication, dated 20 May 1999, has been received from the Permanent Mission of the United States.

Proposal

1. That the objective for the agricultural negotiations be to expand trade opportunities by ensuring further deep reductions in support and protection, while encouraging non-trade distorting approaches for supporting farmers and the rural sector and strengthening the rules governing trade in agriculture.
- In pursuing this objective, the existing framework in the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, with binding commitments in market access, export competition and domestic support, provides the basis on which to pursue further reform. This framework should be supplemented by additional disciplines, as needed, to address new challenges facing the agricultural sector.
- To realize this objective, WTO Members will be encouraged to present specific proposals to implement the mandate set forth in this Decision, beginning in January 2000, and each WTO Member will table a comprehensive offer following agreed parameters no later than x date.

Background

2. Article 20 of the Agreement calls for Members to continue the reform process in agriculture by continuing substantial progressive reductions in support and protection through further broad-based negotiations. The results of these negotiations should address the full range of trade-distorting measures, and should contribute to the long-run objective of a fair and market-oriented agricultural trading system.
3. The basic structure of the Uruguay Round disciplines on agriculture is a sound basis for conducting the negotiations on agriculture. Within the overall framework, additional modalities should be established in the three principal areas - export competition, market access and domestic support. Initial views of the United States on issues to be addressed in each area are found in WT/GC/W/115 and WT/GC/W/107. Additional measures that unjustifiably distort international trade

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in agriculture also must be addressed and subjected to rules and disciplines, including possibly outside of the Agriculture Agreement.

4. An important element of the work programme for the negotiations will be to specify a time frame for tabling detailed proposals for specific disciplines in each area under negotiations and the date for tabling country-specific offers on agriculture.
