

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/GC/W/197  
7 June 1999

(99-2273)

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General Council

Original: English

## PREPARATIONS FOR THE 1999 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

### Negotiations on Agriculture

#### Market Access – Tariff Quota Administration

##### *Communication from Australia*

The following communication, dated 4 June 1999, has been received from the Permanent Mission of Australia.

1. Australia submitted the Cairns Group Vision Statement in WT/GC/W/156 which sets out the Group's objectives for the agriculture negotiations. The following specific proposal is consistent with that Statement and is presented for consideration in the preparatory process.

#### **Proposal**

2. That, as part of the agriculture negotiations, Members ensure that the administration of tariff quotas does not diminish the size and value of market access opportunities.

#### **Background**

3. Tariff quotas in the agriculture sector were a part of the tariffication process of the Uruguay Round and the result was the establishment of some 1,370 tariff quotas. Notifications to the Committee on Agriculture show that Members have adopted a variety of methods for administering these, depending on a number of factors, including the product, the market, the size of the tariff quota, seasonal flows, the number of supplying countries and general methods of distribution within importing countries.

4. In various WTO fora, concerns have been raised about the way members are choosing to implement some tariff quotas. In particular, it appears that the tariff quotas are being administered in such a way as to provide a level of protection greater than the impact of the tariff quota itself. Overall, tariff quota fill rates are less than two-thirds.

5. While tariff quotas remain, the lack of specific rules on tariff quota administration in the Agreement on Agriculture and other WTO Agreements, and the problems which have been identified by Members, mean it would be appropriate to negotiate with the aim of minimizing impediments to effective access to markets.

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