

PREPARATIONS FOR THE 1999 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Negotiations on Agriculture

Market Access

Communication from the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Slovak Republic

The following communication, dated 27 July 1999, has been received from the Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic.

Proposal

1. Ministers agree that, in establishing the modalities for further tariff reductions and other related commitments, Members commit themselves to addressing the existing differences in the levels of effective market opening within the framework of the future agricultural negotiations with a view to narrowing these differences and ensuring a balance of benefits for all Members.

Background

2. The Uruguay Round was a turning-point in the history of the agriculture trade talks. For the first time, all non-tariff measures in agriculture were converted into ordinary customs duties that were consolidated through the binding and subjected to substantial tariff cuts following the agreed modalities.

3. As a result, access to national markets has improved and trade opportunities have expanded worldwide. However, considerable differences persist in the level of effective market access opening as committed by various Members in the Uruguay Round. These differences include, but are not limited to, border protection levels, discrepancies between applied and bound rates, trade-weighted and single average tariffs, tariff peaks, high seasonal tariffs, application of tariff quotas and scope of special safeguard.

4. To produce an overall balance of benefits in attaining the long-term objective of substantial progressive reductions in protection under the continuing reform process in agriculture, the existing differences have to be dealt with and narrowed in the course of negotiations on modalities establishing specific tariff reductions and other market-access commitments.
