Resolution on the WTO agricultural trade negotiations

2003/2515(RSP) - 12/02/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the WTO agricultural trade negotiations, acknowledging that agriculture is one of the most sensitive sectors in world trade due to its impact on food security, food safety and the sustainable use and protection of natural resources and landscapes. Parliament recalled that at the WTO Conference in Doha, all WTO members committed themselves to agricultural negotiations aimed at substantially improving market access, reducing all forms of export subsidies, substantially reducing trade distorting domestic support, providing special and differential treatment for developing countries, and taking account of non-trade concerns. Parliament advised the Commission that the following are indispensable objectives in negotiation: - a reduction in agricultural tariffs and quantitative restrictions on agricultural imports from developing and least developed countries, other than in the most sensitive sectors; the substantial reduction, with a view to the eventual reciprocal elimination by all WTO members, of all forms of export subsidy and schemes having an equivalent effect, including aspects of food aid, export credit, credit guarantees, and loan and insurance schemes; - enhanced recognition of non-trade aspects of agricultural policy, through strengthening non-trade-distorting agricultural support measures through the 'green box', to ensure that well-targeted and transparent support measures to promote environmental and rural development, employment and animal welfare goals are exempted from reduction commitments; and a clarification of the green, blue and amber box classifications; - insistence on each country's right to set its own environmental, food safety and consumer protection standards, with recognition that differentiation of traded goods on the basis of production methods must be possible within the framework of WTO rules, and that WTO rules should therefore not restrict compulsory or voluntary labelling schemes. Parliament also felt that the negotiations must result in special and differential provisions allowing all WTO members to expand market access further and faster in respect of agricultural produce from developing and least developed countries than from developed ones. Developing countries should have flexibility in respect of market access and domestic support commitments, in the interests of their subsistence farming sector, and their development and food security needs. Parliament welcomed the proposal to introduce of a food security box. The EU and all developed countries should make further efforts to improve the income of the poorest developing countries through assistance with diversifying production and increasing the export of locally processed high-value products to their markets. Finally, Parliament felt that agricultural products and tariff measures should be subject to social and environmental criteria which are to be established in compliance with binding international conventions relating to social standards, the management of natural resources and food security (ILO, CBD, UNDP and FAO).