



African Proposal is Untimely Diversion

Published: March 3, 2006

The C-4 West African cotton-producing countries issued a new proposal for disciplines on domestic cotton support in the Doha negotiations.

The proposal: 1) unveils a formula tying increased cotton disciplines to any overall level of reduction in agricultural support, 2) seeks very specific limiting caps on blue box support and a much faster timeframe for implementation of cotton disciplines and 3) repeats the call for a commitment by donor countries to a "safety net" fund for the 4 West African countries.

National Cotton Council Chairman Allen Helms said, "this proposal is an unfortunate diversion from the important work of the world's trade ministers. The ministers' self-imposed April 30 deadline for comprehensive modalities is fast approaching."

The NCC has made clear to US negotiators that continued insistence by some on unfair treatment for cotton only serves to erode US farmers' confidence in the WTO and that can have important political ramifications.

Helms, a Clarkedale, AR, producer, in discussing the WTO problems, noted "a single commodity focus is misplaced if gains for the majority of the world's farmers are a standard for success. It is abundantly clear that the most effective action for the developing world for all commodities will be completing comprehensive agricultural negotiations. No one has yet matched the ambition of the US on agricultural market access. That level of ambition, in both developed and developing markets, is necessary for this Round to be a success."

NCC President and CEO Mark Lange stated "the C-4 has tabled a new proposal that goes well beyond the negotiating parameters established in the July '04 Framework Agreement and the Hong Kong text. Most of their proposal has no support in either of those documents. The C-4 countries are trying to re-negotiate the overall parameters for an agreement."