



## **Statement of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Cairns Group Ministerial Meeting**

**Geneva, Switzerland**

**12 June 2022**

1. We, the Ministers of the Cairns Group<sup>1</sup>, met in Geneva on 12 June 2022 at what is a challenging time for the global trading system, a time of a rising food insecurity and a critical time for the future of global agricultural reform.
2. As a response, we emphasised the urgent need for progress towards a fair and market oriented agricultural trading system with substantial and progressive reductions in agricultural support and protection, to which the WTO agreed over a quarter of a century ago.
3. We emphasised that the WTO's Twelfth Ministerial Conference (MC12) must deliver a concrete and equitable outcome in agriculture. This outcome must provide an agreed basis for post-MC12 negotiations to achieve meaningful, ambitious and comprehensive reforms, with special and differential treatment an integral part of these negotiations.
4. We underscored our concern with the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, natural disasters, conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic on global food security and nutrition. The situation has been exacerbated by the international armed conflict in Ukraine. Its impact on international trade and production of food, agricultural products and inputs, particularly Ukraine's ability to produce and export agricultural products, is negatively affecting global food security, especially in developing countries. We urge Members to work on solutions towards overcoming supply chain disruptions to restore affected agricultural trade flows.
5. Facing such a severe situation we reaffirm the urgency and importance of maintaining fair, open and predictable agricultural markets and trade to ensure the continued flow of food as well as inputs essential to agricultural production and urge all Members to refrain from imposing unjustified trade barriers and restrictions. We call on all Members to ensure that any emergency measures introduced are temporary, targeted, transparent, proportionate, as least distortionary as possible and applied in a manner consistent with WTO rules.
6. We reaffirmed our commitment to agriculture reform as fundamental to the future of the WTO and the future of multilateral rule-making. Agriculture is the most protected and distorted sector globally and remains the most

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<sup>1</sup> Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Malaysia, New Zealand, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Thailand, Uruguay, Vietnam and Ukraine as an Observer

important unfinished business of the WTO. We note the failure to reach any substantive reform outcome in agriculture since the historic decision at the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference in 2015 to eliminate agricultural export subsidies.

7. The need for reform cannot be ignored. The United Nations estimates that global agricultural support to producers<sup>2</sup> amounts to almost USD540 billion per year, the majority of which is considered price distorting or harmful to the environment.
8. Reform of global agriculture trade rules in line with Article 20 of the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) is key to achieving agri-food systems that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. International trade and efficient production play an essential role in improving food security and standards of living, progressing the Sustainable Development Goals, and reducing inequalities.
9. We reaffirm our commitment to making progress in all three pillars of the AoA – domestic support, market access and export competition – with a view to ensuring a balanced and progressive reform process. Maintenance of the status quo or a reversal of Uruguay Round commitments would be unacceptable and inconsistent with the Article 20 mandate. We underline the importance of the Cairns Group's continued leadership in the negotiations to deliver ambitious and meaningful modalities by MC13.
10. We recognise that reform to domestic support can only effectively be pursued multilaterally. We, along with other WTO Members that share our strong commitment to substantially reduce agricultural trade- and production-distorting domestic support, will continue efforts to seek tangible and positive outcomes.
11. We recognise that trade in agricultural products continues to be particularly affected by tariffs and other market access barriers. We will step up efforts to achieve convergence around outcomes that provide for substantial improvements in market access for agricultural products, in order to create more equitable conditions for international trade across the board.
12. We recognise the need to continue negotiations on export competition to ensure that the historic elimination of export subsidies is not undermined or circumvented. We will step up efforts to achieve convergence around outcomes for substantial improvements in disciplines on export financing, export state-trading enterprises and international food aid.
13. We reaffirm our view that development lies at the heart of the multilateral trading system and that agricultural trade reform is essential to support the individual economic development needs of developing Members.

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<sup>2</sup> Including price incentive policies and fiscal subsidies. Source: UNDP/UNEP/FAO, 2021; A multi-billion dollar opportunity: repurposing agricultural support to transform food systems.

14. We affirmed our support for a Ministerial Decision at MC12 not to impose export restrictions or prohibitions<sup>3</sup> on foodstuffs purchased for non-commercial humanitarian purposes by the World Food Programme.
15. We underlined the importance of engaging with industry and farm associations and welcomed the call by Cairns Group Farm Leaders for the urgent reinvigoration of the stalled agriculture reform agenda, including to reinforce the importance of the WTO rules-based system as a whole.
16. We call for all Members to grasp this important opportunity in coming days at MC12 to deliver the foundations for meaningful agricultural trade reform. The stakes are high. Agricultural trade reform is a priority the world – and the WTO – simply cannot afford any longer to neglect.

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<sup>3</sup> Pursuant to Article 12 of the Agreement on Agriculture and Article XI of the GATT 1994.