

Agriculture

Agreement on language on agricultural trade reform represented a final key area in bridging differences, in particular on two issues that were especially contentious.

First, there was the question of linkage between agriculture and environmental issues. Agreement to separate these issues was a major concession by the European Union, which greatly facilitated the achievement of consensus.

Second, there was the question of how to characterize the strengthening of WTO disciplines on export subsidies in agriculture. It had been agreed coming into Doha that negotiations would involve reductions in export subsidies. The question was whether the eventual end point would be acknowledged to be zero export subsidies, or whether the negotiations would proceed "with a view to" eventual elimination. In the minds of the drafters at least, the distinction carried code language significance.

The multilateralists supported as a matter of course

There remains to mention one group of countries that played a role, apart from the United States, the European Union and the large and heterogeneous group of developing countries. This group might be described as the confirmed multilateralists—countries that tend to see a strong multilateral trade framework as strongly in their interests, over and above the commercial benefits that might flow from a negotiated reduction of trade barriers. These countries include the medium-sized, trade-oriented industrialized members of the OECD, including Canada, that are not part of the European Union.

The domestic and international dynamics were quite different for this group than they were in 1986 when the Uruguay Round negotiations were launched. In good measure, this reflected the way in which the context for trade negotiations had changed. With trade barriers substantially reduced and with trade negotiations taking more time to deal with issues than is tolerable for commercially important business matters, getting