

VIRTUAL WTO AGRICULTURE SYMPOSIUM 2020 - AGRICULTURAL TRADE AND
FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

"Big Quotes – Opening Session"

- **Alan Wolff, WTO Deputy Director-General:** "The WTO's Agreement on Agriculture remains the only instrument that exists at the international level to govern global trade in agricultural products. Since its entry into force, world exports of agricultural products have tripled from USD 450 billion to USD 1.5 trillion, constituting an annual growth rate of 5%. In other words, since its creation the world has become ever more interdependent, looking at food security from a more global and holistic perspective. The Agreement has during this last quarter century played a vitally important role in facilitating the flow of food from the lands of the plenty to the countries that would otherwise be lands of food deficit. It is a mutually beneficial system that improves the lives of billions of people."
 - **Qu Dongyu, FAO Director-General:** "The 2030 deadline for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is rapidly approaching. We need to intensify addressing the challenges facing food systems, using all the means, tools and mechanisms available to us. There is no time to waste. Trade is one of these tools. It can boost farmers' productivity and income. It increases their participation in markets and value chains and contributes to more efficient use of natural resources. Trade not only helps to reduce seasonal scarcities of food during normal agricultural production cycles, but also provides an important mechanism to address production shortfalls or supply chain disruptions caused by adverse and unforeseeable events, such as COVID-19."
 - **Agnes Kalibata, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit:** "Trade can play an important role in food systems transformation. COVID-19 has clearly shown that crises and the effects of policies and measures taken to contain them, spill over national borders. We have seen how in a bid to protect populations from the pandemic, governments imposed health measures. These included travel barriers that also affected cross-border trade including movement of food from surplus to deficit countries. The most affected are the ordinary citizens who are already exposed to hunger and poverty. These barriers were tough for many countries that had minimal or no food reserves to cater for their vulnerable populations."
 - **Michael Fakhry, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food:** "What I've learned is that you can't understand international trade regimes without understanding questions of food security; and you can't have a food security policy without addressing international trade."
 - **Edwini Kessie, Director of the WTO Agriculture and Commodities Division:** "The COVID-19 pandemic was certainly a disruptor, but there will be many other disruptors too going forward. The WTO rule-book must stand prepared to weather these changes, and to continue to provide a solid governance framework."
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