

## **Meeting of Open-ended Working Group on the Committee on Commodity Problems, 13 December 2010**

1. The first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on Reform of the Committee on Commodity Problems (OEWG-CCP) was held on 13 December 2010. Twenty-six members attended. Some concern was expressed by those present that attendance was not higher. The main objective of the meeting was to define the scope and terms of reference of the Working Group's activities and to define its way of working and a work programme. In practice the Group's discussion was wide-ranging over many issues related to the CCP and its work.
2. The meeting reiterated the need for a review of the roles and working arrangements of the CCP and its sub-committees to ensure their continuing relevance in the light of developments in commodity markets and especially the current concerns over price volatility.
3. Recent volatility in international commodity markets had underscored the importance of the CCP but the questions remained of how the CCP could do more to highlight new developments and their implications and to be more proactive. It was agreed that the inflexibility of the current scheduling arrangements, the biennial sessions and the limited inter-sessional activity of the CCP constrain the scope to be current, responsive and proactive in dealing with the latest market developments. These constraints are perhaps less binding in the case of CCP's policy and trade analysis work. The OEWG-CCP would need to review all of these issues.
4. The Group agreed that the future of the CCP could not be discussed independently of ongoing discussions of working arrangements for other FAO technical committees and reviews of the roles and functions of other commodity-related organizations such as the Common Fund for Commodities and the specialized international commodity organizations. Members stressed the need for the deliberations of the OEWG-CCP to be focused on those issues not already being considered elsewhere in the FAO reform process, for example as part of the IPA. They also called on the Secretariat to undertake a review of the terms of reference and activities of other relevant commodity-related bodies so as to exploit possible synergies and opportunities for cooperation including joint meetings and jointly-prepared documents.
5. Members drew attention to certain key aspects of the CCP for the attention of the OEWG-CCP. These were agenda setting, work priority setting and timing and duration of sessions. Matters such as reporting and the role of side-events should be left to other FAO fora concerned with reform more generally.
6. The process for setting the CCP agenda was seen as key to ensuring active participation and ownership by members and so needs to be done in a transparent and consultative way. Opinions were divided on the role of a bureau in agenda setting but there was more agreement on the usefulness of informal consultations between the chair/vice-chairs and regional group leaders.
7. Regarding the timing and duration of CCP sessions, timing was seen as crucial to ensuring topicality and proactivity of the CCP. There was some feeling that additional time was needed for full discussion of CCP agendas. Addressing the issues of timing

and duration would also mean reviewing the current back-to-back arrangements with the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) on which members expressed differing opinions. It was noted that inter-sessional work of the CCP would also need to be planned.

8. As regards the sub-committees of the CCP, the intergovernmental commodity groups (IGGs) were regarded as potentially very important but their performance was seen as variable. The Secretariat was asked to undertake a thorough review of the IGGs to inform the discussion in the OEWG-CCP. This review should consider *inter alia* the usefulness of individual IGGs, the scope for private sector participation, attendance and representativeness and scope for mergers between IGGs or their abolition.
9. The following points were agreed for action.
  - The Chair should have informal but structured consultations with regional groups to define the work programme of the OEWG-CCP including future meetings.
  - The areas identified for initial focus by the OEWG-CCP should be: agenda setting; work priority setting; timing and duration of sessions.
  - The Secretariat should undertake a review of the roles and activities of all other commodity-related organizations.
  - The Secretariat should undertake a detailed review of the IGGs.