

Concept Note

Agrifood trade in Latin America and the Caribbean in the current international context

Venue and date: Montego Bay, Jamaica. 7 March 2018

Background and justification

Rapidly changing demographics and the impacts of climate change are expected to contribute to a deepening of food deficits in certain countries and regions which will need to be met, in large part, through increased trade in agrifood products.

With a thirteen percent share of global agrifood exports, Latin America and the Caribbean has the largest net positive agrifood trade balance of any region in the world. FAO-OECD Outlook projections suggest that as a region, Latin America and the Caribbean will see the most significant growth in agricultural net exports over the next decade. As a result, the region could benefit significantly from the growing demand for agrifood products from net food importing countries.

Yet there are concerns that recent political developments in major trading blocs and associated changes in their trade strategies, could constrain future growth in agrifood trade, limiting the extent to which agrifood trade can fully contribute as a means of implementing Agenda 2030.

In a region characterised by a dominance of primary commodity exports and relatively weak performance in value added agrifood exports and with limited intraregional trade, questions are also being asked as to whether trade strategies need to be rebalanced.

The diversity of the agrifood trade status across the Latin American and Caribbean region also means that the future developments in agrifood trade are likely to play out quite differently in terms of their impacts on sustainable and inclusive development in different countries.

Purpose and Expected Outcomes

Against this changing international environment, the purpose of this Side Event is to explore the extent to which the potential of agrifood export from the region may be constrained by developments in international trade strategies and to discuss what the region's own agrifood trade strategies should be in this new context.

The Side Event is expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- promote greater awareness of the key role that agrifood trade will need to play in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in ensuring global food security, and of the significant contribution that Latin America and the Caribbean as a region is expected to make;
- discuss the extent to which the changing international environment, driven by recent political developments, will require adjustments in the region's trade and trade-related strategies;

- increase recognition of the diversity of agrifood trade status across the region and facilitate an exchange of views on the extent to which trade can be a driver of sustainable and inclusive development in different Latin American and Caribbean countries, if complemented by active economic, social and environmental policies.

Structure

The Side Event will consist of a panel discussion with ministers from five Latin American and Caribbean countries facing different trade related opportunities and challenges, and will be moderated by the Strategic Programme Leader of FAO's Strategic Programme on Inclusive and Efficient Agricultural and Food Systems.

The Side Event will start with introductory remarks by the Moderator to set the context for the discussion and to introduce the panelists. This will be followed by a panel discussion during which Ministers will provide their perspectives on the future role of the region in global agrifood trade and on the changes to current trade strategies that may be required to fulfil this role.

The Moderator will then facilitate questions and inputs from the floor, before summarizing the key messages.

Agenda of the Side Event on Agrifood trade in Latin America and the Caribbean in the current international context	
10 minutes	Introductory remarks, FAO
45 minutes	Facilitated panel discussion
30 minutes	Questions from the floor
5 minutes	Summary of the discussion, FAO