

Remarks from Members of the Regional Coordination Committee of the Group of Producing Countries of the Southern Cone (GPS) regarding the XIII Ministerial Conference of the WTO

We want to highlight the key importance we assign to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the system of rules ensuring free and predictable international agricultural trade, essential for the competitiveness of the agricultural sectors of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

To strengthen credibility and trust in the WTO rules system, it is necessary to make substantive progress in agriculture.

While preparations for the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference, to be held between February 26 and 29 of this year in the United Arab Emirates, are in progress we reiterate our special interest in achieving concrete results in agricultural negotiations.

In this regard, we wish to emphasize that:

- It is fundamental for our sector to move forward in the reform of international agricultural trade rules, particularly in the areas of agricultural subsidies and market access. As net contributors to global food security, with environmentally sustainable productions and without trade-distorting subsidies, we consider the success of the Ministerial Conference justified only if tangible progress in agriculture is achieved.
- We promote a "holistic" agenda approach. As expressed in the 12th Ministerial Conference in 2022, it is not acceptable to agree exclusively on outcomes in a single issue that could imply setbacks for the reform process. Such is the case of public stockholding for food security purposes. We understand that some proposals would represent regressions in WTO rules and increase subsidies from major emerging economies in the agricultural market.
- Considering the limited remaining time for the February 2024 Ministerial Meeting, we understand that negotiations should focus on laying the groundwork for a relaunch of the WTO at the next Ministerial Meeting, with the establishment of an agenda that fits with current times and challenges.

Regarding this new agenda to be agreed upon for the 14th Ministerial Meeting, we highlight the following aspects:

- It is necessary to establish a balance between traditional topics—domestic support, market access, non-tariff barriers—and the new agenda—climate change, sustainability, food security-.



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Contribuyendo a la producción global sustentable de alimentos
Contributing to the global sustainable food production

- Food security is a concern for the whole world. We understand that addressing imbalances between supply and demand in various regions should be balanced through freer trade, allowing countries to achieve their food security through trade. To achieve this, the reduction and progressive elimination of restrictive measures on the import and export of food products should be promoted aiming at facilitating the "meeting" of supply and demand with low levels of transaction costs and uncertainty.
- The sustainability agenda, in its three pillars and linked to production processes, has positioned itself on the international stage and even at the regional level. And while it is an objective for all agricultural producers, regardless of their size or geographical location, there is no single definition; therefore the "one-size fits all approach" should not be applied.
- Environmental commitments should not lead to the generation of new import restrictions which, based on environmental concerns without scientific basis and global agreements, lead to so-called "green protectionism". The commitment to adopting evidence-based and multilaterally negotiated measures should be maintained.
- The imposition of unilateral measures, including tariffs on the carbon content of agricultural products or labeling of "carbon footprint" may result in trade barriers that harm the production and export of food in developing countries, undermining the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the WTO itself. Additionally, these measures will seriously affect food security.
- A key aspect in approaching any negotiation is to have a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the starting point, based on evidence rather than rhetoric. In this regard, transparency must be ensured through notifications to the WTO to count with the best available information.