



Cairns Group farm leaders deliver strong message to Ministers

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NATIONAL Farmers Federation (NFF) President and Chair of the Cairns Group Farm Leaders' forum, David Crombie, yesterday chaired a meeting of farm leaders from countries including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Pakistan and Paraguay.

Today, the farm leaders met with all Cairns Group Ministers and stressed the urgent need for significant progress to be made in the Doha Round of World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations in the coming months, with a view to concluding the negotiations this year.

Farm leaders' told Cairns Group Ministers that they remain disappointed that the negotiations had not yet been successfully concluded and that they believe the key reason for this remains a lack of political leadership and vision from WTO members with highly-protected agricultural sectors.

Farm leaders priorities remain:

- Reaching an agreement that will deliver substantial improvements in market access;
- Achieving the early elimination of all forms of export subsidies; and
- Achieving real cuts to current expenditure on trade-distorting production subsidies.

Farm leaders said Cairns Group Ministers must ensure the potential gains of any final Doha agreement must not be jeopardised by broad exceptions for 'sensitive' agricultural products, 'special' agricultural products or new 'safeguard mechanisms'. And that an outcome along these lines would be unacceptable to Cairns Group farmers.

Trade reform, particularly in the area of agricultural market access, remains farm leaders' priority because it remains a proven way of addressing global poverty and of allowing efficient farmers to realise their full and deserved economic potential.

Farm leaders' noted developed economies must bring more to the table on market access and domestic support and that, additionally, leading developing economies must also make a greater contribution – particularly by being fair and reasonable on issues like 'special products' and 'safeguard mechanisms'.

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A limited WTO agreement will not be acceptable or sufficient for the world's farmers. Ultimately, this Round's value will be judged by how successful it was at levelling the playing field and on how much new commercial trade it creates.

Farm leaders will meet with a number of Cairns Group Ministers, senior officials and the WTO Director-General, Pascal Lamy, in the coming days.

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