

Trade liberalization under WTO-Doha

Developing and less developed countries in the Asia-Pacific region may not be able to realize the potential benefits and opportunities offered under the current WTO-Doha round of negotiations unless they participate in broad-based agreements that will govern future global trade in agricultural products. Governments must restructure domestic agriculture and trade policies and adopt productivity and competitiveness enhancement measures to support the capacity development of small farmers and agribusiness SMEs and improve domestic regulatory institutions. These were among the views and recommendations of the study meeting on Implications of Trade Liberalization under the WTO-Doha Development Agenda (DDA) for Small Farmers and Agricultural Trade organized by the APO in cooperation with the National Productivity Council and the Ministry of Agriculture of India, in New Delhi, 21–26 March. Seventeen participants from 14 countries, and four international experts from the WTO and ESCAP secretariats, two from two think tank organizations in Bangladesh and the Philippines, and four from India attended.

The topics covered by experts at the study meeting included: State of play in the WTO-DDA agriculture negotiations: Key features of the main proposals and their implications for developing countries in Asia; Preferential trade agreements and agricultural trade liberalization in Asia; Rules of origin and nontariff barriers in agricultural trade: Perspectives from developing and less developed countries; Making agricultural trade liberalization work for small farmers: Strategies and measures for enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of small farmers in the Asia-Pacific region; Agricultural trade protection: A perspective from India; and Agricultural trade liberalization and



Discussing issues in trade liberalization

agricultural development in India: An examination of the successful transition of India from net food importer to net food exporter. A panel discussion tackled issues and challenges in moving the WTO-DDA forward, and how developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region can maximize benefits from agricultural trade liberalization.

Participants visited the Agricultural Processed Food Export Development Authority (APEDA) and the Centre for WTO of the Institute of Foreign Trade. The APEDA board chairman briefed participants on programs supporting agribusiness SMEs. The head of the Centre for WTO spoke on initiatives to support India's negotiating team in the current Doha round. Among APO member countries, only India and the Republic of China have an institute providing technical and advisory support to negotiating teams in Geneva. 🌐