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EU Ag Ministers begin campaign to win hearts and minds of the third world

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Report Highlights:

The recent informal meeting of EU Agricultural Ministers assessed the outcomes of Cancun and started campaigning to get the third world on board with their objectives. Common Agricultural Policy-inspired development strategies including geographic indications were suggested as the primary means for third world agriculture to move forward.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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Summary

At the informal meeting in Taormina, Sicily September 20 – 23 EU Ag Ministers, Agricultural Commissioner Fischler, and Health Minister Byrne assessed the outcomes of Cancun and started wooing the third world. Common Ag policy (CAP)-inspired development strategies including geographic indications were proffered as good for the third world and the way forward. Commissioner Fischler emphasized there is no turning back from CAP reform while Italy's Ag Minister Alemanno observed that perhaps they needn't have bothered.

All deplored the failure at Cancun as a loss to agriculture. Commissioner Fischler said future EU public relations efforts will win over EU consumers as well as third world countries who will learn about EU values and programs for the rural sector, the environment, geographic indications, food safety, and animal welfare. Commissioner for Health and Food Safety David Byrne praised the EU for being the number one donor of assistance and training to the third world on food safety, pesticides, additives, animal health concerns, and biotechnology. Minister Alemanno proclaimed geographic indications as a way to protect the rights of rural people in the context of development.

Fischler referred to the World Food Summit and recalled a list of needs for the developing world including increasing agricultural productivity and incomes, boosting production, and doing so without degrading the rural environment. Ag Minister Alemanno mentioned the Everything But Arms initiative, and said the EU was ready to engage in a cultural dialog and share values with the developing world. In his speech at a press session he did not clash with Fischler or Byrne, and he attempted to smooth over his previous statement in a council session where he allegedly expressed regrets about CAP reform.

Guest presenters at the EU ministerial were from Brazil, Indonesia, and the Food and Agriculture Organization. These guests from Latin America, Asia, and Africa reinforced the message that food insecurity and poverty were not addressed by trade liberalization alone. The EU's point was that accompanying policies and possible contributions by EU member countries were needed to bring about progress in the developing world.

In the Presidency's working document on common objectives for Ag policies, food security, and rural development Alemanno's stance against Ag biotechnology is clearly a value he wants to share with the third world. In this development model he proposes that the EU should set up extension, training, and marketing assistance giving special attention to GMO free products.

Regarding Cancun, Commissioner Fischler had much to say about the way forward, none of it about biotechnology or banning it. He emphasized that the EU will not revisit the definition of the green box and that the concept of capping the green box is a huge problem for the EU. He asserted that with each step of enlargement the green box will expand. Note: all acceding countries were represented at the informal ministerial.

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