

## Press Release

### **Regional Workshop on: Agriculture-related Issues in the Preparation for Accession to the WTO**

Under the patronage of Dr. Adel Safar Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, the National Agricultural Policy Center (NAPC) in collaboration with Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), organized a Regional Workshop on " Agriculture-related Issues in the Preparation for Accession to the WTO" at its premises in Damascus, on 26-28 October 2008.

Joining World Trade Organization (WTO) is supposed to generate commercial gains, providing certain commitments are met to comply with WTO laws and regulations. On the other hand, WTO accession may create potential risks. In order to mitigate these risks countries should be prepared for effective participation in accession negotiations. This requires familiarization with regulations, procedures, and the applied conventions of the organization, in addition to benefit from experiences and lessons of acceding members.

Due to the fact that many countries of the Near East Region, namely Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, Iraq, Sudan, Yemen, and Syria, are preparing for the WTO membership, the Workshop aimed to strengthen their national capacities in the related negotiations on agriculture and food security and to enhance their participation in the related multilateral trade negotiations.

The workshop presentations focused on recent developments in the Doha Round of WTO negotiations on the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) with review on the legal provisions of it, commitments undertaken by WTO members joined recently, and its potential impacts on trade and agriculture. In addition, the workshop discussed other conventions of the Organization related to the agricultural sector including Safety and Plant Health SPS, Technical Barriers to Trade TBT, Intellectual Property Rights and Genetic Origins TRIPS. The meeting also reviewed the experiences of the newly acceded members from the Near East, Jordan and Saudi Arabia; as well as the preparations for the accession negotiations of the other countries in the region such as Sudan and Syria.

The training side of the workshop addressed the agricultural trade data and analytical tools adopted in international trade including WITS ,ITC ,FAOSTAT ,and AMAD.

Participants to this workshop involved experts from the World Trade Organization WTO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations FAO, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development UNCTAD, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development AOAD, the National Agricultural Policy Center NAPC, and representatives of agriculture ministries from the forecited countries.

#### **Workshop Presentations:**

- Countries in the Process of Accession to the WTO: Major Agriculture and Food Security Issues. Dr. Nasredin Elamin, FAO
- Recent Developments in the Doha Round of WTO Negotiations on Agriculture. Dr. Waleed EI-Nozahy/ Ministry of Foreign Trade, Egypt

- WTO Agreement on Agriculture: Review of the legal provisions of the Agreement. Mr. Hamish Smith, WTO
- The WTO Agreement on Agriculture: Review of the commitments undertaken by the Recently-Accessed Members; and Potential implications for trade and agriculture. Mr. Ralf Peters, UNCTAD
- SPS Agreement: Review of the legal provisions of the Agreement and the implementation. Mr. Victor Mosoti, FAO
- TBT Agreement: Review of the legal provisions of the Agreement and the implementation. Mr. Hamish Smith, WTO
- TRIPS Agreement: Review of the legal provisions of the Agreement and National implementation of plant varieties. Mr. Victor Mosoti, FAO & Mr. Hamish Smith, WTO
- Recently Acceded Members from the Near East: experience and lessons learned. Dr. Mr. Abdullah Al Obeid, Saudi Arabia
- Jordan Accession to WTO. Mr. Ziad Jaradat, Jordan
- The Case of Syria in the Process of Accession to the WTO. Mr. Atieh El Hindi, NAPC
- Overview of Agricultural Trade Databases & Analytical Tools. Mr. Ralf Peters, UNCTAD