

Immediate issues

Pending Decisions and Actions

INTERNATIONAL/WTO

The Doha Development Round: agricultural trade negotiations

1. The Doha declaration calls for negotiating modalities and rules to be established for market access, export subsidies and domestic support by the end of March 2003. New Zealand expects these modalities to require WTO Members to improve access to their markets both through tariff reductions and the expansion of tariff quotas, eliminate export subsidies over a short period of time, and significantly reduce trade-distorting forms of domestic support.
2. The establishment of the negotiating modalities is a very high priority for the MAF (working in conjunction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade) over the next six months.
3. At the same time other WTO Members are pursuing their own objectives, often contrary to New Zealand's. The recent introduction by the United States of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act, the European Union's preoccupations with domestic reform and EU enlargement, and Japan's slow progress in reform all point towards a difficult period ahead.

The Doha Development Round: forestry trade negotiations

4. While the Doha declaration makes no special mention of when modalities for further market access commitments shall be established for industrials, it is anticipated that negotiations will be finalised in early 2003. MAF with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and in consultation with the forest industry, will develop New Zealand's negotiating position.

WTO Accessions

5. Russia has been engaged in accession negotiations since 1994 and is the last major economy that has yet to become a WTO Member. New Zealand is an active member of the Working Party on Russia's accession. We support Russia's earliest possible accession to the WTO but we, and other Working Party members, maintain that the accession needs to be within appropriate terms as set out in the WTO agreements. In particular we maintain that Russia should agree to realistic market access concessions, bind its export subsidy commitments at zero and that a fair and representative base period needs to be established for Russia's domestic support commitments. It remains difficult to anticipate when negotiations for this accession will be concluded.

WTO Dispute Settlement

6. Canada has announced that it will appeal the recent Dispute Settlement Panel decision on its dairy export subsidies. New Zealand's response to that appeal will be an important focus for the MAF until the end of 2002.
7. New Zealand's involvement as a "third party" to the United States' dispute with Japan on apple access will also involve the MAF.

Planted Forestry Meeting

8. In March 2003, New Zealand will host an international experts meeting on the role of planted forests in sustainable forest management. The main purpose of this meeting is to promote the role of planted forests through addressing concerns expressed about planted forests' contribution to sustainable forest management. A key objective is to prevent the adoption by major international fora of any decisions or declarations which could adversely impact on market opportunities for wood from New Zealand's planted forests. It is anticipated that approximately 100 overseas government and NGO representatives will participate at the meeting. Ten countries and three international forestry organisations will sponsor the meeting.
9. MAF is responsible for the development of the meeting's agenda, programme and administrative arrangements. Assisting with these tasks is a domestic steering committee and an international steering group (comprising relevant government agencies, forest industry, non-government organisations, and research and university interests) which the MAF chairs.