



NFF – Oxfam

Trade and Development Roundtable

Opening remarks by NFF Trade Committee Chair, Mr Allan Burgess

Rydges Capital Hill, Canberra

17 August 2005

- Welcome to this the second joint NFF – Oxfam Trade and Development Roundtable.
 - Can I particularly welcome Andrew Hewitt the CEO of Oxfam Australia and can I extend a warm welcome to all who have joined us today.
- It's not often that organisations like Oxfam and NFF come together to jointly discuss and even advocate on issues but international trade reform is one of the areas where we share many common goals.
- Obviously we don't agree on everything as I'm sure we will find out through debates today but, fundamentally we share a common belief that eliminating agricultural protection would lift a lot of people out of poverty - over 300 million according to the World Bank.
- **Put simply, there is no other policy or action the world could take that can deliver these benefits, in a short time frame. If we are serious about addressing global poverty we have to solve this issue.**
 - Of course, I should also make clear that for Australian and Cairns Group farmers there is a degree of self-interest in these negotiations.
 - It would be improper not to acknowledge this. We are efficient agricultural producers and we want and deserve better access to international markets.

- NFF fundamentally believes, that eliminating or reducing harmful trade distortions in the global agricultural trading system will significantly increase the sustained profitability of Australian farmers going forward.
- **Having said this, we meet at a troubling time in the negotiations.** The WTO Doha Round is in serious trouble and strong political leadership will be required if this December's 6th WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong is to be successful.
- The problem remains agriculture and specifically agricultural market access – as I'm sure Andy Stoeckel will mention later we continue to try to find a technical solution to what is fundamentally a political problem.
- **In recent months** we have heard promising comments from world leaders. The G8 made some positive noises as did Trade Ministers recently but these words now need to turn into actions in Geneva.
 - I agree with the recent comments from the outgoing WTO Director-General Dr Supachai - the Round is in trouble and it is now time to move from identifying problems to solving problems, from generalities to specifics and from deciding whose fault everything is to finding solutions.
 - If we don't heed this advice Hong Kong will fail and the world let alone Australian and Cairns Group farmers cannot afford this!
- To set the scene, we continue to face a huge challenge - in 2004 OECD country agricultural support totalled US\$279 billion (the same as in 1995) accounting for up to 30% of farmers' incomes. The EU spent US\$133 billion, Japan spent US\$49 billion and the US spent US\$46.5 billion.
- Anyway, enough from me, again I welcome you here today. I encourage you to contribute robustly and I look forward to the discussion throughout the day.
- I should also mention that we have the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade Mark Vaile joining us at 12 noon and Senator Sandy Macdonald the new Parliamentary Secretary for Trade will also join us at some point throughout the day and RIRDC's Board will be joining us for lunch.
- I would now like to hand over to Andrew Hewitt.