COMMITTEE ON COMMODITY PROBLEMS

Seventy-sixth Session

Rome, 11-13 September 2024

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE INTERSESSIONAL EVENT
“REPURPOSING AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT TO TRANSFORM
AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS”

Queries on the substantive content of the document may be addressed to:

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I. Background

1. At its 75th Session, held from 13 to 15 July 2022, and under the agenda item on Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPoW), the Committee “encouraged the Bureau, with the support of the Secretariat, to organize topical intersessional events between the CCP sessions”.

2. On 1 June 2023, the first CCP intersessional event took place on the theme “Repurposing agricultural support to transform agrifood systems”. The event was conducted in a hybrid mode, featuring two technical presentations followed by a panel discussion with experts nominated by the Members. The event was opened by the Chairperson of the CCP.

II. Objectives

3. Our agrifood systems are currently facing numerous challenges and mounting pressures to provide sufficient, nutritious, and safe food for all, while also fostering environmental, economic, and social sustainability. In this regard, the debate on how agricultural support can be reoriented towards the provision of public goods and the promotion of sustainability objectives as well as the need for the transformation of agrifood systems have attracted increased attention.

4. Against this background, the primary objective of the event was to contribute to this debate by providing a platform for sharing how countries are designing and implementing programmes to repurpose agricultural support to improve food system sustainability. It also aimed to discuss the role of FAO and other international organizations in providing information and evidence to support policy decision-making at country and global level, as well as the policy space available for countries to repurpose agricultural support in the context of international agreements.

III. Conduct of the event

5. The event opened with two technical presentations. Ms Ghada Elabed, Senior Agriculture Economist at the World Bank, expounded on the reasons why countries opt to repurpose policies and support and emphasized the importance of aligning public policies with sustainability objectives, sharing specific case studies. In the second presentation, Mr David Laborde, Director of the FAO Agrifood Economics Division, provided a comprehensive definition of repurposing agricultural support and shared the insights gained so far on its positive impacts as well as the possible implications for sustainability objectives.

6. Following these presentations, a dynamic discussion panel was held with distinguished experts from Australia, the European Union and the United States of America discussing their respective experiences with repurposing policies and support, highlighting the obstacles they encountered and the valuable insights they gained. The discussion revolved around the following main thematic areas:

   • Advantages and the possible implications of repurposing agricultural support, including the potential impact on trading partners.

   • Possible trade-offs between traditional agricultural policy objectives and those that relate to sustainability.

   • Challenges to implementing repurposing of agricultural support, including with regard to the buying-in by different stakeholders.

   • Elements that need to be considered with respect to the compatibility of repurposing programmes with the WTO members’ commitments.

IV. Key takeaways

7. The main substantive takeaway messages that emerged from the event are as follows:

   • A holistic approach is needed when it comes to repurposing agricultural support. This requires interventions outside the agricultural policy spectrum for the repurposing to be effective.

For a successful transformation of agrifood systems, ineffective, inefficient policies and support measures need to be replaced by measures that are better aligned with the goal of sustainable and resilient productivity growth.

There is no-one policy package that fits all context. The effectiveness of a policy can vary greatly depending on the location, context and conditions in which it is implemented. Therefore, a tailored approach is essential to achieve the desirable outcomes, benefitting from international trade rules.

When repurposing agricultural support, governments must be mindful of the particularities of the country and the local context. Indeed, farmers’ support for policy changes, incremental or otherwise, will be key to the success of reform efforts.

Repurposing agricultural support for investing in innovations, in productivity-enhancing and in sustainable production practices and creating incentives for their adoption can bring significant gains for all. However, achieving such gains requires close collaboration among all stakeholders.

Improving resource use efficiency can reduce fiscal costs for governments and environmental externalities; however, this requires careful consideration of current and projected trade-offs.

Agricultural support should be designed to facilitate the pursuit of sustainability objectives while allowing markets to function properly without distortions. In this context, it is essential to avoid trade-restricting measures that can harm global food security.

In pursuing sustainable objectives, countries should consider how markets can be better utilized to incentivize producers and complement agricultural policies.

**Agenda of the intersessional event**

**1 June 2023**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Speaker(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13:00 - 13:05</td>
<td>Opening of the event</td>
<td>CCP Chairperson: Ambassador Yaya Adisa Olaitan Olaniran of Nigeria</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:05 - 13:30</td>
<td>Technical presentations</td>
<td>• Mr David Laborde, Director, Agrifood Economics Division (ESA), FAO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ms Ghada Elabed, Senior Agriculture Economist, Agriculture and Food Global Practice, World Bank</td>
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<td>13:30 - 14:00</td>
<td>Panel discussion</td>
<td>Moderator: Lee Ann Jackson, Head of Division, Agro-food Trade and Markets, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)</td>
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<td>• Mr Jared Greenville, Executive Director, Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), Australia</td>
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<td>• Mr Gijs Schilthuis, Head of Unit for Policy Perspectives, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), European Commission</td>
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<td>• Mr Jason Hafemeister, Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs, United States Department for Agriculture (USDA), United States of America</td>
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<td>14:00 - 14:25</td>
<td>Open interactive discussion Q&amp;A session</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:25 - 14:30</td>
<td>Conclusions and wrap-up</td>
<td>CCP Chairperson: Ambassador Yaya Adisa Olaitan Olaniran of Nigeria</td>
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