



Will MC13 fail again in addressing farmers' discontent around the world?

Press release – Tuesday, February, 27, 2024.

[Protests have been growing in Europe](#) (Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, Greece and other countries) for almost 3 months claiming for better incomes, more public support, and an immediate stop to free-trade agreements, especially the EU-Mercosur agreement.

“European Farmers are taking the street because they have been hit hard by dwindling incomes, the stress linked to high levels of debt, and the excessive workload. We clearly see that the European Union’s embrace of WTO-promoted policies of deregulation of agricultural markets in favor of big agribusiness and the destructive international competition are directly responsible for European farmers' plight”, said Morgane Ody, vegetable farmer in France and member of the coordination committee of European Coordination of Via Campesina (ECVC).

Meanwhile, in India, there were massive demonstrations 2 years ago that reached a stalemate without major changes. Today, protests are back with a demand for a guaranteed administered price by the government at which products will be purchased from farmers.

“The farmers' protest we are seeing all around the world right now tells a lot about the limits of a food system based on free-trade exchanges without protection for the less-equipped farmers. Countries are asking for more policy space to regulate their market and secure farmers' incomes. Conversely, the current WTO rules allow big corporations to prosper, and put more and more people in food insecurity”, said Jonas Jaccard, policy officer for Humundi, Belgium.

Ironically, at the same time, members of the WTO are negotiating on agriculture during MC13. And what is on the table reinforces the concerns of farmers worldwide about this unfair and inequitable system.

What is a stake at the MC13?

On the one hand, developed countries and the agri-exporters countries' (Cairns group) are demanding further market-based solutions apparently to solve the global food security problem. On the other, developing countries are asking for more policy space to be able to develop their agriculture, including through mechanisms such as a permanent solution on public stockholding (PSH) and a Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM).

In spite of a proposal (JOB/AG/229) submitted by 80 countries covering the African group, the ACP countries and the G33 asking for a permanent solution on the PSH, a promise made in Bali in 2013 at MC9, it has not even been discussed. A permanent solution remains blocked till this day. Similarly, an SSM to protect developing countries against import surges that destroy livelihoods and create uncertainties, is blocked.

“For us, and for our brothers and sister farmers across the developing countries and LDCs, the permanent solution is a critical policy tool to ensure our farming and our livelihoods. That itself is also critical for our public food programmes to run and ensure food security for our citizens. The Peace Clause, as you well know, is ineffective in meeting its objective, as it has been riddled with limitations and difficult and irrational conditionalities. Similarly, the SSM should have been given long ago and we demand the SSM immediately”, said K V Biju, Coordinator, Samyukta Kisan Morcha (NP), an organization representing over 3 million farmers in India.

So far, the WTO has failed to protect small-scale farmers and to address the problem of food security across the Global South since the number of people starving all around the world has not diminished. And now farmers in the North are also joining that fight.

All issues of critical interest to developing countries and LDCs are at the risk of going under yet again. At the same time, a full liberalization agenda is being pushed, even though it has failed again and again, both in the Global North and in the Global South.

Contacts:

K. V. Biju - Samyukta Kisan Morcha (NP)
Jonas Jaccard – Humundi, Belgium
(email addresses redacted in this online version)