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## **New WTO agriculture text must protect farmers' rights**

With a new text on agriculture due imminently, ActionAid urges the working group on agriculture to take full account of food security and the needs of poor farmers and rural communities.

ActionAid welcomes the proposal on agriculture by the G21 group of developing countries that has recently formed an alliance to stand up to the EU and US. ActionAid also welcomes the communiqué from the Alliance for Strategic Products, a further group of 23 developing countries which have stressed the need for greater protection for key food security crops.

“It is crucial that developing country demands for protection for poor farmers are fully integrated into any new text that is put before the Cancún Ministerial. Trade liberalisation has decimated farming communities in countless developing countries. The WTO must prove it can address the genuine concerns of poor farming communities. Otherwise there is no justification for agriculture being in the WTO,” said Aftab Alam Khan, trade policy specialist from ActionAid Pakistan.

New research released today by ActionAid has shown that:

- The dumping of agricultural goods such as sugar and dairy products has had a devastating impact in developing countries. Sugar imports into southern Africa have resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of jobs.
- Large volumes of low-priced imports have also destroyed rural communities across the South. Import surges have led to significant falls in production in countries such as Botswana, Burkina Faso, Jamaica, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Niger and Zambia, marginalising small producers and increasing unemployment. Whereas developed countries have special safeguards to protect themselves for import surges, few developing countries enjoy such safeguards, highlighting the serious imbalance in the current agricultural trade rules.

ActionAid's research also reveals that the level of domestic subsidies in the EU and US is unlikely to be reduced. Instead they are merely relabelling existing subsidies to make them compliant with WTO rules.

“Simply renaming subsidies fails to deal with the root problem of dumping. The EU and US cannot continue to ignore the growing call from developing countries to put their own

houses in order. Any pro-development outcome from Cancún requires a significantly higher level of commitment from the richest countries,” said Tim Rice, trade analyst from ActionAid UK.

**For more information, or a copy of ActionAid’s new report *Six Ways for Developing Countries to Negotiate Their Demands in the 5<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Meeting*, please contact: Hannah Crabtree in Cancún, tel: +52 998 107 6303 (local mobile), or +44 7734 581 738**

**In Cancún the ActionAid team is staying at the Best Western – Cancún Clipper Club, Boulevard Kukulcan. KM 9, Hotel Zone, Cancún. Tel: +52 998 891 5999.**