

Food security must be protected from all challenges in the WTO as it is not only a sensitive issue for India but also a critical social imperative : Anand Sharma

Updated on 2 Dec, 2013 11:13 PM IST BY INVC Team



INVC, Bali, The Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Shri Anand Sharma, in a statement strongly underlining India's concerns at a meeting of the G-33 in Bali today on the eve of the 9th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has said that food security must be protected from all challenges in the WTO as it is not only a sensitive issue for India but also a critical social imperative. Stating that there is a national consensus and complete political unanimity on this matter in India, Shri Sharma said: "It is therefore difficult for us to accept an interim solution as it has been currently designed. As a responsible nation, we are committed to a constructive engagement for finding a lasting solution. **But till such time that we reach there, an interim solution which protects us from all forms of challenge must remain intact.**"

Stressing that procurement and public stockholding for food security are invaluable instrumentalities used by developing countries to secure interests of the poor and the vulnerable, Shri Sharma urged updating of WTO rules under the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) as it would rectify inherent flaws and then help developing countries in carrying out such legitimate operations without defaulting on their commitments. The G-33 proposal on food security aims to address the problems faced by developing countries due to outdated WTO rules which base agriculture subsidy calculation on external reference prices of 1986-88, even as global food prices have increased manifold during this period. It is surely reasonable, the Minister said, that we should not be asked to peg farm support calculations on prices which were prevailing thirty years ago! Stating that reforms in agriculture trade rules envisaged in the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) would have made a major contribution towards improving the lot of millions of poor farmers in the developing world, he noted that unfortunately, a consensus on the overall agriculture had eluded members so far.

Coming down heavily on developed countries, the Minister observed that while developing countries had shown a spirit of cooperation and pragmatism in the negotiations in Geneva over the last several months, the same spirit had been sadly missing in the positions of some of the members from the developed world. "We cannot continue to have rhetoric of development agenda without even a reasonable attempt to address the issues which are of primary concern to developing economies. For decades, handful of farm lobbies of some countries have shaped the discourse and determined the destiny of millions of subsistence farmers of the developing countries. The massive subsidization of the farm sector in the developed countries is not even a subject matter of discussion, leave aside serious negotiations," he said.

Stressing the need for a fair balance in the Bali outcome, Shri Sharma said: "We can no longer allow the interests of our farmers to be compromised at the altar of mercantilist ambitions of the rich. The Bali Ministerial Meeting is an opportunity for the developing countries to stay united in resolve to demonstrate the centrality of agriculture in trade talks".

The G-33 meeting, chaired by the Minister of Trade of Indonesia Mr. Gita Wirjawan, was attended by all its 47 member countries: Indonesia; Antigua and Barbuda; Barbados; Belize; Benin; Botswana; Bolivia; China; Cote d'Ivoire; Congo; Cuba; Dominica; Dominican Republic; El Salvador; Grenada; Guatemala; Guyana; Haiti; Honduras; India; Indonesia; Jamaica; Kenya; Republic of Korea; Madagascar; Mauritius; Mongolia; Mozambique; Nicaragua; Nigeria; Pakistan; Panama; the Philippines; Peru; St. Kitts & Nevis; St. Lucia; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Senegal; Sri Lanka; Suriname; Tanzania; Trinidad and Tobago; Turkey; Uganda; Venezuela; Zambia and Zimbabwe.

<https://www.internationalnewsandviews.com/food-security-must-be-protected-from-all-challenges-in-the-world-as-it-is-not-only-a-sensitive-issue-for-india-but-also-a-critical-social-imperative-anand-sharma/>

www.internationalnewsandviews.com