



## Short Article

### Doha Round for the Poor

The WTO Doha Round is expected to be signed on 1 January 2005. Although progress of the round is very slow because of a deadlock in some important agricultural issues, mainly market access, domestic support, and export subsidies. Moreover, a big gap between industrialized and developing countries' positions on special and differential treatment (SDT), trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS), and public health, is considered a major obstacle to reach agreement (Abbott, 2003; Finger, 2002).

With the increasing bargaining position of developing countries, the Poor, who mostly live in developing countries are expected to make better use of the round for the following two reasons. Firstly, poverty issues have been the main agenda of most international meetings and discussions between international organizations, such as United Nations, during the last decade. The sheer number of poor people has caused an increase in the number of infected people by various endemic illnesses such as HIV and TB. Moreover, this situation has helped fuel regional conflicts and terrorism (Abbott, 2003). The UN with its Millennium Development Goals has helped to ensure that poverty reduction is now gaining its most significant momentum from an international perspective.

Secondly, most of the deadlocked agricultural issues stem from the high number and intensive nature of government policies related to the agricultural sector in industrialized countries. The global trading system is still very much biased against the Poor. An average poor person faces twice the level of trade tariff than an average rich person. Agricultural subsidies in the rich world total US\$ 300 billion, more than Africa's GDP and six times the amount of development aid to poor countries (World Bank, 2003). In 2002, direct support to farmers by countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) totaled around US\$ 235 billion.

Poor farmers cannot escape the poverty trap if they are forced to compete with products subsidized by the treasuries of the richest countries. Solutions include effectively pursuing the process of reform in the three areas of market access, domestic support and export competition, while providing greater flexibility for developing countries to pursue rural development and food security (FAO, 2003).

Following Abbott (2003), an alternative approach to realize this objective is to implement so called Critical View (CV) in the Doha Round. Under this approach, the ultimate goal of trade liberalization is development and fair trade is a way to achieve the goal. Therefore, under the Doha Round, this approach should emphasize the following efforts:

- *Rectifying imbalances.* Various policies that cause imbalances between developing countries and industrialized countries and inhibit development should be eliminated or reduced. These policies include TRIPS, general agreement on trade in services, and subsidy policies in industrialized countries.
- *Rethinking reciprocity.* It is unfair to expect "full reciprocity" between developing countries and industrialized countries because of differences between economic capacity, the various political situations, and the vulnerability of developing countries. An alternative offered by this approach is to place reciprocity based on the relative state of development.
- *Special and differential treatment (SDT) and flexibility.* SDT is intended to improve the markets of developing countries in industrialized countries and to give flexibility to developing countries to intervene in their markets for the sake of development.
- *Trade issues of special interest to developing countries.* Under the Doha Round, issues that are the main concern of developing countries should be prioritized. These issues include the vulnerability of developing countries' exports due to technical inferiority price risk, and the dependency of developing countries on only a few exportable commodities.
- *Food security and rural development.* More than 800 million people in developing countries are very vulnerable to food insecurity. Therefore, various support to developing countries to overcome this problem and to promote rural development should be one of the main issues of the round.

Considering most people cultivating secondary crops are poor, the success of developing countries in implementing critical view approach in the Doha Round could have significant benefits for them. It will be a daunting task but the Doha Round, labeled as a development round, is one of the best opportunities for decision makers to fight for the poor, including secondary crops' farmers ■

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## FlashBREAKING



## Trade Liberalization Limits Poverty Alleviation

There is now less confidence that the mainstream trading system can help the Poor. The benefits of liberalization to low-income agricultural producers are likely to be very limited, concludes the UN Conference on Trade and Development Report. Yet at the start of the 21st century trade does not seem to be helping some of the world's poorest communities to escape from poverty. Trade liberalization and the rules of international trade are having a detrimental impact on many of the world's poor and the environment. For more substantial gains (towards food security), countries will have to encourage the expansion of their domestic food production sectors.

J. Madeley, 2004. Trading off the Poor, People & the Planet 2000-2004, <http://www.peopleandplanet.net/doc.php?id=1525&section=16>.

## Food or Forest?

Most experts agree that if we are to feed 8 billion people - many of them demanding a meat-rich diet - in 2030, then world food production will have to increase by at least 40 per cent. In the view of FAO, 80 per cent of this increase will have to come from more intensive crop production, and the remaining 20 per cent from the expansion of arable land, much at the expense of existing forests.

Anonym, 2004. Feeding a World of 8 Billion, <http://www.peopleandplanet.net/doc.php?id=341&section=3>, (1 May 2004).

## Human Development Beyond Economic Growth

Human development is about much more than the rise or fall of national incomes. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests. People are the real wealth of nations. Development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value. And it is thus about much more than economic growth, which is only a means - if a very important one - of enlarging people's choices.

UNDP, 2004. What is Human Development?, Human Development Reports, United Nations Development Programme, <http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/PovertyAroundTheWorld.asp>.

## Poverty is the Real Killer

Billions of people in more than a hundred countries will be exposed over the course of their lives to at least one earthquake, cyclone, flood or drought. The most recent reminder of the deadliness of these disasters was the December 26 earthquake in Bam, Iran, which claimed more than 40,000 lives. On average, natural disasters cause 184 deaths per day. But death rates are far higher in poor countries than in wealthy nations, even if the incidence and intensity of disasters are the same. The real killer is poverty, not the forces of nature: Only 11 per cent of the people exposed to natural hazards live in poor countries, but they account for more than 53 per cent of the total number of recorded deaths.

UNDP, 2004. New Disaster Risk Index Demonstrates That Natural Disasters are More Deadly in Poor Countries, UNDP Report Says, UNDP, Newsroom, <http://www.undp.org/dpa/journalists/>, (2 February 2004).

## Two Hundred Thousand More People Every Day

Much of the world's population - especially in the South - is very young, with plenty of potential to reproduce. Thus, although the rate of population growth began to decline some 30 years ago, annual additions to the human population are still near to their highest level, with some 77 million being added every year, or over 200,000 people every day. This is equivalent to a San Francisco every week and almost a Germany every year. Human impacts on resources and on the environment vary therefore, not only with changes in population growth and distribution but also with changes in levels of consumption and the technologies involved. For example, since 1950 the richest fifth of humanity has doubled its consumption of energy, meat, timber, steel and copper per person and quadrupled its car ownership, while the poorest fifth of humanity has increased its general consumption hardly at all ■

Based on T.A., Obaud, 2004. Population and Human Development - the Key Connections, <http://www.peopleandplanet.net/Doc.php?id=199&section=2> (01 April 2004).

## Combating Malnutrition with Secondary Crops

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced a US\$ 25 million grant to the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) to combat malnutrition, a leading cause of infant mortality in the developing world, by improving the nutritional quality of staple foods in developing countries. Malnutrition contributes to over half of infant mortality in the developing world, and the UN estimates that nearly one-third of the world's population suffers from deficiencies in micronutrients such as iron, zinc, and vitamin-A. Even mild levels of micronutrient malnutrition can damage cognitive and physical development, lower disease resistance in children, and reduce the likelihood of mothers surviving childbirth. Iron deficiency alone affects over 3.5 billion people in the developing world and is responsible for 100,000 maternal deaths during childbirth each year. Vitamin-A deficiency causes more than 500,000 children to go blind each year and is a leading cause of infant mortality. Biofortified crops have the potential to transform the health of these communities by allowing them to grow crops that are naturally fortified with essential micronutrients. The first crops to be developed include those most widely consumed in the developing world, such as rice, wheat, maize, beans, cassava, and sweet potato ■

Based on HarvestPlus, 2004. Gates Foundation Announces US\$ 25 Million Grant to Support Innovative Nutrition Program for Poor Countries, New and Hot Topics, [http://www.harvestplus.org/noteworthy\\_gates.html](http://www.harvestplus.org/noteworthy_gates.html).

## Surviving with Sweet Potato

As source of vitamin-C, vitamin-B6, manganese, copper, biotin and dietary fiber, the hardy sweet potato is helping tribes in Orissa, India, beat hunger as they fight for survival against droughts, floods and desperate poverty. In large tracts of Orissa's tribal belt, beset with natural disasters and penury, the humble sweet potato is grown as it can survive a flood or a drought and provide some food security. On average, a family grows 10 to 15 plants from which they harvest 50-100 kg of sweet potato. They would like to grow sweet potato on a larger scale if the problems of rats, wild boars and pigs could be tackled. To prevent the animals from ruining the crop, farmers take extra care like constructing fences and planting close to their homes. If some training can be provided to the farmers for better storage and preservation, there is great potential to increase the production of the crop in the tribal areas. Though in India sweet potato is usually eaten after roasting or boiling, it has diverse culinary uses in other Asian and South American countries ■

*Based on India News, 2004. Sweet Potatoes Provide Food Security to the Hungry, <http://news.newkerala.com/india-news/index.php?action=fullnews&showcomments=1&id=1&id=15444> (6 May 2004).*

## China: Invests in Agricultural Product Processing Technology

The Ministry of Science and Technology of China has decided to pour 150 million yuan (US\$ 18 million) by 2005 into the research and development of agricultural product processing technology. The investment is part of the ministry's action plan to push forward the nation's arduous agricultural restructuring. For a long time, low quality, shabby packaging and poor hygiene conditions have been a barrier to the export of China's processed agricultural products and have weakened their competitiveness in the domestic market. The technology used in processing soybean, corn, rapeseed and apple topped the joint-action's development list. The development of agricultural processing is essential for the farmers to fatten their incomes and counter the negative impacts of China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO). In addition to agricultural structural readjustment, accelerating farm-produce processing will contribute more to the added value of the agricultural sector, thus benefiting the farmers financially. The ministry aims to create an additional 3 to 4 million jobs in the sector after new processing technology is adopted. And about 50 billion yuan (US\$ 6 billion) of output value will be achieved by 2005 after the action plan is implemented ■

*Based on China Daily, 2002. China to Pour US\$ 18m into Agricultural Research by 2005, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/BAT/36090.htm>.*

## Flash EVENTS



### 4<sup>th</sup> International Crop Science Congress

26 September - 1 August, 2004  
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

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Unit 11/97 Castlemaine Street,  
PO Box 1280  
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### 2004 International Conference on Official Poverty Statistics Methodology and Comparability

4 - 6 October, 2004  
Manila, the Philippines

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### 2004 Corn & Sorghum and Soybean Seed Research Conference

8 - 10 December, 2004  
Hyatt Regency Hotel  
Chicago, Illinois, USA

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## Book Review

### Agricultural Research and Poverty Reduction; Some Issues and Evidence

Edited by Shantanu Mathur and Douglas Pachico, Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), Colombia, ISBN 958-694-058-6, 2003

The short-term goals of research and development efforts might be to improve productivity through technological breakthroughs, increase public goods, apply new patents or publish influential papers. In the field of agriculture, especially focusing on developing regions, poverty reduction is the most significant and brilliant overall goal of research activities along with environmental conservation. The importance of assessing the impact of agricultural research, particularly in terms of its role in poverty reduction is not a groundbreaking issue. However, my personal impression, this topic has rarely been discussed seriously until this decade when donor support for international research projects has gradually been shrinking. The reasons are the complexities of relationships between primary outputs of research activities (technologies, varieties or all kinds of new findings) and poverty alleviation. Developed technologies should be modified into appropriate form and go along way before being delivered to farmers as a technological package. There are various factors, which have an influence on products other than the introduced technologies, and increased production doesn't necessarily certify better income for rural poor. Researchers' unwillingness and fear to clarify the (un-) effectiveness of their academic effort is another factor of this difficulty.

The reports in this book have been mostly chosen from presentations which were originally given at the international workshop "Assessing the impact of agricultural research on poverty alleviation", held in 1999 in San Jose, Costa Rica. The workshop and this book examined three themes. (1) How does agricultural research reduce poverty? (2) What are the relations between poverty and the environment? (3) How can agricultural research be better managed to reduce poverty? The publication of this book, although 4 years after the workshop, comes at an appropriate moment since the World Summit in Johannesburg and the World Food Summit both held in 2002 have called renewed attention to the issues of poverty and sustainability.

This book presents case studies that provide empirical evidence on the relationship between rural poverty and the results of agricultural research. The first section, "Overview of Issues" begins with a conceptual framework for analyzing impacts. Then it reviews the empirical evidence to address the broad issues such as inequitable technological innovation

crop production in the process of shifting to cash cropping, and worsening regional inequities through commercialization by favoring greater potential areas. Next, it looks at more specific dimensions of understanding the impact of agricultural research: the gender dimension, the use of GIS to understand poverty, the issue of dialogue with policy makers, and the issue of innovation as a social process.

The second section, "Case Study Evidence" is a set of case studies that go into detail based on experience on some of the issues and relationships that have been contextualized in the first section. For example, it introduces the case of the analysis of the impact of an integrated cassava research and development project, which was established to broaden market opportunities for small-scale farmers through the emergence of cassava processing plants (drying plants). The project was implemented during the 1980's through an initiative of CIAT. In the project, private and public institutes conducted development of production and processing technologies, and socio-economic and market studies along with technical assistance, providing credit. Using regression techniques, the report concluded that the project directly and indirectly reduced poverty by creating an alternative income-generation activity through selling roots, creating employment and reducing production costs through improved production technology.

It is well known at the broad context level that agricultural research has major impacts that go beyond farm households and rural communities on the effect on urban food prices, employment, and overall economic growth. Most of the studies in this book have focused on the direct impact of improved agricultural technologies on poor farmers. However, this is only a small proportion of the overall impacts. Even though the editor mentioned this insufficiency, it is regrettable that the case studies of the book do not address these broad effects of agricultural innovation, but rather at what specifically happens at the rural community and household level. The quantitative analysis concerning the impacts of agricultural research would not be easy to aggregate up to the regional or national level. However this ambitious trial would have added a significant component to this book ■

*Reviewed by Tomohide Sugino, Project Leader,*