

**Sustainable Farm Livelihoods, North and South  
Policy options under threat at the WTO**

**Report from a North-South Roundtable and Learning Exchange  
May 12-18, 2005**

Canadian Food Security Policy Group  
Canada's Dairy, Egg and Poultry Producer Groups  
Canadian Wheat Board

# Sustainable Farm Livelihoods, North and South Policy options under threat at the WTO

North-South Roundtable and Learning Exchange May 12-18, 2005

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In May 2005, the Canadian Food Security Policy Group (FSPG),<sup>1</sup> together with Canadian producer associations and guests from developing countries, held a series of events to highlight common concerns regarding the World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations on international trade in agriculture. The objective of these events was to identify common ground between civil society organizations (CSOs) and farmers from Canada and developing countries, in preparation for the Hong Kong WTO Ministerial in December 2005. Participants included representatives of farmers, farm groups, civil society and intergovernmental organizations from Canada, Brazil, India, and countries throughout Southern and Western Africa. The series of events consisted of:

- *Learning and exchange:* From May 13-15, the international guests met with supply management and farmers' organizations and visited farms in Ontario and Québec to exchange with Canadian farmers about orderly marketing systems.
- *Roundtable:* A roundtable in Ottawa on May 16 examined the relevance of a range of policy tools for ensuring orderly markets, and perspectives on strategies to promote the importance of sustainable farm livelihoods in trade negotiations. The more than 80 participants at the roundtable included the international guests and Canadian representatives of farmer organizations, producer associations and civil society organizations, as well as representatives from government and academia.
- *Preparation of Joint Statement and Advocacy:* Building on the themes that emerged from the roundtable, the representatives of farmers, farm groups and civil society organizations from Canada, Brazil, India and Southern and Western Africa met on May 17 to develop a joint statement on *Principles for International Agricultural Trade Rules and Joint Demands for the Doha Agenda* (see Appendix 2). The statement was released at a press conference on May 17 and discussed May 18 at a meeting with Canada's Minister of International Trade as well as at meetings with senior officials from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, International Trade Canada and the Canadian International Development Agency.

The participating networks and organizations are committed to further collaboration and advocacy on these issues in the months ahead.

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<sup>1</sup> The Canadian Food Security Policy Group (FSPG) seeks to promote development assistance and international trade rules that protect and enhance food security in developing countries. The FSPG is committed to the development of a global governance system that will contribute to fulfilling the human right to food, strengthen the livelihoods of small food producers in developing countries and foster a healthy agricultural sector for farmers in Canada. Members include the Canadian Council for International Co-operation, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, Development and Peace, ETC Group, Inter Pares, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, National Farmers Union (Canada), Oxfam Canada, Partners in Rural Development, Rights & Democracy, UPA Développement international, USC Canada and World Vision Canada. For more info on FSPG policy work see [www.ccic.ca/e/003/food.shtml](http://www.ccic.ca/e/003/food.shtml).

## 2. LEARNING AND EXCHANGE

### Supply management orientation session (May 13, 2005)

The learning and exchange component started on May 13 with a series of presentations hosted by the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec (UPA) in Longueuil. *André Drapeau of the UPA* explained the organizational structure of the union, its history, functioning and objectives. Founded in 1924, the UPA network now includes 90 percent of the agricultural producers in Québec. Its core activity is to help producers market their products collectively.

In 1993, the UPA began assisting other farm organizations around the world through the creation of UPA Développement International (UPA-DI). *André Beaudoin of UPA-DI* explained that its mission is to support family farming as a model for sustainable agriculture. Using its expertise in supply management systems, UPA-DI focuses on the development of producer-led collective marketing organizations in Africa and Latin America. Said Mr. Beaudoin: “Our objective is not to export our supply management system, but to share our expertise with other farmers and help them find their own way to organize and market collectively.”

*Patrice Dubé of the Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec* explained how orderly marketing has ensured fair returns for milk producers. Orderly marketing includes supply management and collective marketing. In the case of milk, both supply management and collective marketing<sup>2</sup> are used to obtain uniform, stable, predictable farmgate prices that cover all production costs. A “joint plan” enables milk producers to unite as a single business entity to market their milk and negotiate prices with processors. A federal-provincial agreement enables producers to match supply with demand. Under this agreement, the government limits imports and sets basic milk prices (based on production costs), and producers plan their production to meet market requirements and dispose of excess production at their own cost. Producers benefit, processors can plan more efficiently (given stable and predictable prices), consumers benefit from low prices and there is no cost to government. While these mechanisms are managed by the producers themselves, their functioning requires the existence of a legislative framework.

### Meeting with National Farmers Union, Local 316 (Kingston area) (May 14, 2005)

On Saturday evening, the international visitors met National Farmers Union (NFU) leaders from eastern Ontario and shared common concerns. Local NFU farmers shared their perspectives and presented NFU's analysis of the ongoing farm income crisis. In their view, there is an imbalance in market power, which is the root cause of this crisis. International trade policy has been changing the economic position of farmers. Trade agreements allow transnational corporations involved in agriculture and food to

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<sup>2</sup> In the case of western Canadian wheat, the production is sold collectively through the Canadian Wheat Board (single desk selling) but the supply is not managed. In the case of eggs, the supply is managed but producers have chosen to individually market their products.

consolidate into fewer and fewer suppliers for, and buyers from, farmers. At the same time, the world's one billion farmers are forced into a single hyper-competitive market. In a brief entitled *Solving the Farm Crisis: A Sixteen-Point Plan for Canadian Farm and Food Security*, the NFU outlines a comprehensive plan to end the farm income crisis. Among the solutions are the use of orderly marketing and supply management to provide some balance in farmers' favour in an otherwise dysfunctional marketplace.

### **Farm visits (May 13 to 15, 2005)**

The group visited eight farms across Québec and Ontario: four dairy farms (three of them organic), two egg farms, one piglet-raising operation, and one goat milk and cheese farm. Most of the dairy farms also have rotating grain crops. The farms visited are all family-run and close to the national average in size. Most of the farms were transferred to the current owners by their parents. The level of technology used varied greatly, even for similarly-sized family-run farms.

The farmers under the orderly marketing system (milk and eggs) are very positive about the model. Aside from the above-mentioned advantages, farmers also cited greater access to bank credit because of their more predictable incomes. They agreed that the agricultural sectors under supply management are the most viable today, and were concerned about the threat to this system posed by potential WTO tariff reduction requirements.

Most of the supply management farmers visited shared concerns about how to transfer the farm operations to their children. Increasingly high cost of quota when transferred, major fixed assets, mounting debt and the need to maintain funds for retirement make it difficult to transfer farms to the next generation in an equitable way. Some farmers outside the supply managed systems noted that the systems limit small-scale production (e.g., for family use) for those who do not purchase quota.

For the international participants, the farm visits were an eye-opening experience. Most had very different understandings of “family farm” and “livelihood”. Some were surprised by the scale of operations and the level of mechanization of their Canadian counterparts. Beyond these differences, however, they perceived shared fundamental farm challenges, and quickly found common ground with their Canadian counterparts.

## **3. ROUNDTABLE**

The roundtable was a conference-style event featuring presentations and discussions.<sup>3</sup> (See Appendix 1 for the agenda).<sup>4</sup> Several key themes emerged from the day.

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<sup>3</sup> In a lunch-time address to the roundtable, the Honourable Aileen Carroll, Canada's Minister of International Co-operation, acknowledged that both Northern and Southern agricultural producers are concerned about the upcoming WTO Ministerial in Hong Kong. She reiterated that CIDA remains committed to supporting agriculture and sustainable livelihoods in the South. The full text of the Minister's speech may be found at [www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cida\\_ind.nsf/vLookupSpeechEn/84AB2EA82800ADFB852570040059D7F2?OpenDocument](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cida_ind.nsf/vLookupSpeechEn/84AB2EA82800ADFB852570040059D7F2?OpenDocument).

## **Need for Policy Flexibility to Protect Livelihoods of Small-Scale Producers**

A series of presenters made the case that liberalized trade as promoted by the WTO is harmful to most family and small farmers, and that countries need to retain the policy flexibility to manage volatile agricultural markets. Presenters and roundtable participants underscored that the issues related to small-scale and family agriculture in North and South go beyond economics to encompass social, cultural and environmental issues.

Keynote speaker *Ndiogou Fall*, *President of Réseau des organisations paysannes et de producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROPPA)*, which represents 35 million West African farmers, described the negative impacts on West African farmers of structural adjustment and dumping of subsidized imports. He noted that trade policies are increasing poverty in the South, and that farmers in the North are also suffering from depressed prices. Mr. Fall put forward the view that vital functions of agriculture – ensuring food security and the right to food, maintaining environmental sustainability and providing reasonable livelihoods – require intervention in the market. Farmers' voices are not sufficiently heard at trade negotiating tables, and farmers need to organize more, strategize more, and become more engaged in the trade debate. He noted that less than 10 percent of agricultural production is destined for international trade (the rest being for distribution in local or national markets), and stressed that countries need to have the flexibility to put in place policies that make sense for their reality.

In a later presentation, *Baba Dioum*, *Secretary General of Conférence des Ministres de l'Agriculture de l'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre* reiterated the importance of agriculture to livelihoods in rural Africa and the severe difficulties being experienced by African farmers. Most African countries have already had to open their markets because of structural adjustment. Mr. Dioum noted that the WTO July Package does not respond to the concerns of developing countries regarding improved market access, reduction of export subsidies and reduction of trade-distorting internal support. He stressed that African countries need to organize, do their own analysis and develop trade policy positions relating to their own interests. Although countries will not share all the same concerns, he noted that there are points of convergence and areas where African countries, Canada and others should reflect together on what they can do together.

## **Ensuring Fair Returns for Producers**

Two Canadian presenters described how orderly marketing systems can play a vital role in addressing the problems of agricultural markets in ways that benefit both producers and consumers. They noted that successful Canadian orderly marketing systems are now under threat at the WTO. *Marcel Groleau*, *President of the Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec*, described the system of supply management for dairy products in Canada. Producers obtain 100 percent of their revenue from the market. Canadian producers receive a higher return on their product than do producers in the US, and

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<sup>4</sup> A list of roundtable participants and biographies of the presenters are available on request from CCIC (info@ccic.ca).

Canadian consumers pay less for dairy products than do American consumers. Canada's system permits the maintenance of family farms: the average dairy farm in Québec is one-sixth the size of the average dairy farm in the US. All three pillars of Canada's dairy supply management system are under threat at the WTO: market access rules threaten import controls, domestic support provisions threaten producer pricing, and export competition rules threaten production discipline.

*Carl Potts, Advisor, Strategic Planning and Corporate Policy for the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB)* described Canada's single-desk selling system for wheat and barley exports. The CWB is farmer-controlled and does not require government funding. Farmers benefit from higher revenues, branding, a farmer voice in grain handling and transportation, economies of scale in market development and promotion, and increased influence with government. An effective single-desk system requires enabling legislation, the legal ability to enforce the legislation, an effective governance structure and strong farmer support. It is not trade-distorting, but CWB is classified as a state trading enterprise (STE) under article 17 of the GATT, due to the "special privileges" (single desk) granted by the Canadian government. Disciplines on STEs being negotiated as part of the July Package will have a harmful effect on the CWB as they are slated to remove government loan guarantees and the underwriting of losses. Mr. Potts stressed that current negotiations on STEs are relevant for developing countries as well as for countries like Canada, as it is important that current negotiations not take away valuable policy tools that could be used in the future.

In discussion, roundtable participants expressed concerns about corporate concentration in agriculture and the relative market power of retailers and processors compared with farmers. There was support for the idea that trade rules should allow for national policy measures to boost farmers' power in the marketplace, such as effective supply management and single-desk selling systems.

### **Supporting a Diversity of Local Agricultural Systems**

The theme of the varied and vital roles of agriculture was echoed by farmers from three continents. In presentations that resonated with many roundtable participants, farmer representatives from Brazil, India and Canada spoke of the importance of small-scale and family agriculture for food security, livelihoods and environmental sustainability. Their presentations illustrated that around the world, sustainable farm livelihoods are endangered by trade rules that will restrict the ways in which farmers cooperate to seek a fair return on their efforts. In presentations and discussion periods, the point was made repeatedly that each country's needs and situation are different and there should not be one model for all.

*Sandra Bergamin of the Federation of Farm Workers (FETRAF), Brazil* described cooperative arrangements between Brazilian farm families to reduce production costs, improve quality, produce value-added products and market products. She noted that there are two models of agricultural development in Brazil: family farms producing most of the food for domestic consumption, and large export-oriented operations. She maintained that

only the large companies will benefit from the system being pushed by the WTO. She emphasized that trade must be a tool for development, and that mechanisms to protect and stimulate family agriculture are legitimate and necessary. Ms. Bergamin stressed that the WTO must recognize the right of countries to support and defend sustainable models of agriculture, and ensure that countries have the option of stimulating and protecting sustainable processes of rural development based on family farms.

*Harinderjit Singh of the Dairy Milkmen Union, Punjab, India* spoke about the challenges facing India's dairy sector. India's system of dairy co-operatives is the largest in the world and has made India self-sufficient in dairy products, with no government subsidies. About 10 percent of the population – 90.8 million people – is involved in dairy production. He noted that the opening of India's dairy market to cheap imports will destroy these livelihoods. Mr. Singh advocated “no to WTO!”, emphasizing that the WTO cannot be sufficiently reformed and should be eradicated. He emphasized that “the building of an alternative is becoming both more necessary and possible”.

*Colleen Ross, Women's Vice-President of Canada's National Farmers Union* described how Canadian farm families are experiencing an acute income crisis. Expanded trade and higher yields are not helping farmers remain viable: in 2004, Canadian farmers tripled exports but farm income hit an all-time low. Except for supply-managed products, returns are less than the costs of production. She stressed that major changes are needed to agricultural trade policies if farmers are to obtain a fair return. The NFU supports the food sovereignty approach, which feels agriculture should be removed from WTO rules.

In discussion, it was reiterated that different countries have different needs and that trade rules should permit a diversity of approaches to agriculture, including respecting the importance of local production for local consumption. A variety of roundtable participants noted the importance of looking for opportunities to partner, work in coalition, form spaces for discussion and develop solidarity between farmers in different countries.

### **Strategies for Trade Negotiations**

Civil society organizations from South and North reflected on the importance of collaborative action to push for trade policies that would support sustainable farm livelihoods. *Rangarirai Machedze, Director of Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI), Zimbabwe* noted that negotiations at the WTO are conducted by states but in the interests of corporations. Two-thirds of all trade is conducted by multinationals, so it not surprising the rights of farmers are ignored. He emphasized that there is a need to question the whole framework of trade agreements, which are causing misery for so many. The prospects for a successful ministerial at Hong Kong depend on the timelines for agriculture, GATS and NAMA (non-agricultural market access) pre-negotiations – progress in one sector can affect progress in another. A coordinated strategy is thus needed for effective campaigning. He noted that considerable negotiation takes place in untransparent processes driven by a small number of countries,

such as mini-ministerials and Green Room processes, and that civil society needs to address these processes.

Mr. Machemedze reiterated the importance of focusing on areas of common agreement between alliances of North and South, and building on these to develop a possible common approach. He noted it is also important to understand the contradictions between North and South (issues such as Mode 4 of the GATS, the opposition bloc to NAMA and the tension between the G33 and the G20). Reformists (providing their agenda is people-centred development) and activists denouncing the WTO from “outside” can provide different kinds of pressure.

*Gauri Sreenivasan, Trade Policy Officer, Canadian Council for International Co-operation* summarized two emergent development agendas regarding agricultural trade rules: an offensive agenda for better market access and a defensive agenda that is critical for farm livelihoods, poverty issues and the environment. Like developing countries, Canada and other Northern countries have both defensive and offensive agendas. Key defensive elements that were present in proposals before Cancun have been dropped in the July Package. Ms. Sreenivasan noted that Canadian CSOs have consistently advocated the need for global rules that regulate international trade and ensure its fairness, while not preventing governments from managing borders for sustainable farm livelihoods. She argued that CSOs must continue to oppose forced liberalization and insist on policy space for North and South to manage volatile agricultural markets, as long as measures do not contribute to dumping. CSOs need to advocate also for disciplines on dumping and for tools for governments to block dumped produce at the border, for faster subsidy reform, for the issues of monopolies and corporate pricing to be addressed, and for democratization of the negotiation process.

In discussion, roundtable participants reinforced that there need to be spaces for dialogue between civil society and governments.

*Gerry Barr, President-CEO, Canadian Council for International Co-operation,* summarized key themes and areas of agreement that had emerged from the presentations and discussions. Many negative impacts of trade rules were noted, both for producers and consumers, in contrast to the examples given of diverse systems in Canada and elsewhere that benefit consumers as well as producers. Many participants noted the urgency of maintaining culturally and nationally appropriate livelihood-based agricultural production systems. The main area of disagreement concerned whether to attempt to reform the WTO or oppose it altogether. But it was clear from the discussions that there are prospects for alliances between civil society and governments, between those who work “inside” and those who work “outside”. There is interest in the idea of a defensive development agenda to manage markets and borders in ways which defend and sustain national agricultural systems, and approaches that minimize the damage of forced liberalization. There is considerable interest in building Canada’s relatively successful experience in agriculture and capturing its lessons for trade rules and for national agricultural projects in other countries. There is also concern to guard against pressures for agricultural interests to be sacrificed in favour of deals in other sectors.

## **4.0 JOINT STATEMENT**

Building on the shared concerns and principles that had emerged from the May 16 roundtable, the representatives of farmers, farm groups and civil society developed and issued a joint statement on May 17. (See Appendix 2 for a copy of the statement). The statement was released at a press conference on May 17 and a media release was also issued (see [www.ccic.ca/e/004/news\\_2005\\_05\\_17\\_farmers\\_talk\\_trade\\_ottawa.shtml](http://www.ccic.ca/e/004/news_2005_05_17_farmers_talk_trade_ottawa.shtml) for the text of the media release).

**APPENDIX 1  
ROUNDTABLE AGENDA**

**Sustainable Farm Livelihoods, North and South**  
Policy options under threat at the WTO  
Volunteer Canada - 330 Gilmour Street, Ottawa  
16 May 2005

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Speaker</b>
8:30	Coffee and registration	
9:00	Welcome and Review of Context and Objectives	Stu Clark, Senior Policy Advisor, Canadian Foodgrains Bank
9:10	<b><i>Key Note – Agriculture and Trade: Finding Common Ground for the World’s Farmers</i></b>	Ndiogou Fall, President, Network of West African producers and peasants organizations (ROPPA)
9:40	Plenary Discussion	
10:00	<b><i>ORDERLY MARKETING</i></b> <b>Moderator: Darlene Dessureault, Dairy Farmers of Canada</b>	
	<b><i>Supply Management in Canada</i></b>	Marcel Groleau, President, Dairy Farmers of Quebec
	<b><i>Single Desk Selling in Canada</i></b>	Carl Potts, Canadian Wheat Board
10:50	Plenary Discussion	
11:15	Break	
11:30	<b><i>Key issues and Expectations for the Doha Development Agenda</i></b>	Baba Dioum, Secretary General, Council of Agricultural Ministers of West and Central Africa
12:00	Lunch	
12:30	<b><i>Agriculture and the Development Agenda – Lunch time address</i></b>	<b>The Honourable Aileen Carroll, Minister of International Cooperation</b>

1:15

## *FARMER PERSPECTIVES*

**Moderator: Anna Paskal, InterPares**

*Small Farmers in Brazil – A Women’s Perspective*

Sandra Bergamin, farm leader, Federation of family farm workers (FETRAF), Brazil

*Dairy Farmers in India: Cooperatives and National Organizing*

Harinderjit Singh, Dairy Milkmen Union, Punjab, India

*Canadian Family Farm Livelihoods Under Threat*

Colleen Ross, Women’s Vice-President, National Farmers Union (NFU), Canada

2:35 Plenary Discussion

3:00 Break

3:20

## *STRATEGIES FOR HONG KONG*

**Moderator: Mark Fried, Oxfam Canada**

*Preparing for Hong Kong – An African Perspective*

Rangarirai Machedmedze, Director, Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and Negotiations Institute, Zimbabwe

*Preparing for Hong Kong – A Canadian Civil Society Perspective*

Gauri Sreenivasan, Trade Policy Officer, Canadian Council for International Co-operation

4:05 Discussion

4:30 **Listener’s Report**

Gerry Barr, President-CEO, Canadian Council for International Co-operation

4.45 Discussion

5:00 **Closing**

Stu Clark, Senior Policy Advisor, Canadian Foodgrains Bank

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## APPENDIX 2

### ***PRINCIPLES FOR INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL TRADE RULES AND JOINT DEMANDS FOR THE DOHA AGENDA***

We, the representatives of farmers, farm groups and civil society organizations from Canada, Brazil, India, and countries throughout Africa, met in Ottawa on May 16, 2005 to establish common ground for advocacy on international agricultural trade. In the spirit of the Dakar Declaration, we share a strong interest in preserving and promoting producer-led orderly marketing mechanisms such as supply management, collective marketing, farmer cooperatives and single desk selling, which are currently under threat for all countries in the Doha negotiations.

#### **We believe that:**

1. Trade rules must allow governments to protect the livelihoods of family farmers and small scale producers.
  - Trade rules must allow for national policy flexibility, including border measures, to support and protect domestic agricultural development.
  - Countries must be allowed to defend themselves from below average cost of production imports.
  - Trade rules must not undermine the ability of governments to implement their human rights obligations including the right at an adequate standard of living and the right to food.
  
2. Trade rules must permit policies that guarantee a fair return for family farmers and small scale producers including the costs of production, labour and investment.
  - Trade rules must allow for national policy measures that boost farmers' power in the market place, including supply management, single desk selling, and other forms of producer-led collective marketing and distribution.
  - Farmers must be given the necessary legislation, infrastructure and recognition to counteract the concentration of corporate power that dominates international agricultural markets.
  - Trade rules must allow for the development of international supply management agreements to stabilize prices for export commodities.

3. Trade rules must respect and allow policies supporting the diversity of local agricultural systems provided they don't result in dumping on international markets.
  - Trade rules must allow for government measures to address consumers concerns including health and environmental preferences (e.g. labeling).
  - Governments must be allowed to provide farmers with tools that help them organize collectively.
  - The pursuit of local production for local consumption must be recognized as a legitimate policy option for national agricultural plans.
  - Trade related intellectual property rights must not undermine farmers' rights to save, exchange and re-use seeds.
  
4. Trade rules must ensure fairness and equity in international markets.
  - Direct and indirect export subsidies must be urgently eliminated.
  - Trade rules must reflect the different levels of development of member countries.
  - Trade rules must end dumping of agricultural goods on world markets and provide flexibility for states to use tools to protect themselves from such dumping.
  - Governments must agree to means to enforce greater transparency on transnational corporate actors with respect to their internal pricing, as well as rules to address corporate concentration.
  
5. International trade negotiations must be transparent and allow for meaningful participation of all countries.
  - Governments must reject a process driven by a small number of countries, including Green Rooms and mini-ministerials, and insist on a process and timeframe that permits the participation of all members.
  - There must be no trade-offs between agriculture and other sectors.
  - Governments must undertake effective consultations with all sectors of their societies to ensure democratic process.

**Canadian Council for International Cooperation – Canadian Foodgrains Bank – Canadian Broiler Hatching Egg Marketing Agency – Canadian Egg Marketing Agency – Chicken Farmers of Canada – Canadian Turkey Marketing Agency – Dairy Farmers of Canada – Inter Pares – Federacao dos trabalhadores na Agricultura Familiar da Regiao Sul/CUT (Fetraf-Sul/CUT) – National Farmers Union – Oxfam Canada – Rights & Democracy – Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI) – Réseau des organisations paysannes et de producteurs agricoles de l'Afrique de l'ouest (ROPPA) – L'Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA) – UPA Développement international**