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DAC BRIEFING: THE DEVELOPMENT DIMENSIONS OF AFRICAN COTTON

Summary Record

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DAC BRIEFING: THE DEVELOPMENT DIMENSIONS OF AFRICAN COTTON

Summary Note

1. The *DAC Briefing on the Development Dimensions of African Cotton* brought together key stakeholders from donor and multilateral agencies, international financial institutions (IFIs), regional organizations and development banks, as well as Ministers, other senior representatives and producer representatives of African countries involved in cotton production and trade.
2. The main objectives were to: (1) examine how the cotton sub-sector is reflected in development policies and poverty reduction strategies, in light of the importance of cotton production and trade for the development of some African countries; (2) share information on emerging approaches to development assistance programmes targeted at the cotton sector and examine the extent to which the latter are incorporated in agency Country Assistance Programmes, in light of the WTO July Framework Decision; and (3) discuss how to apply lessons of alignment and harmonization to the design and delivery of assistance programmes for the cotton and other related sectors, in order to increase aid effectiveness.
3. There were a number of key themes running throughout the meeting. These included (1) the critical importance of finding both short- and long-term solutions to the cotton sub-sector issue in light of the difficulties currently faced by African producers; (2) the interplay between international, regional and national dimensions; (3) the importance of aligning donor support with the regional efforts of the West African countries and the countries' national poverty reduction strategies; and (4) the need to scale up bilateral and multilateral action including through improved co-ordination and harmonisation. All these efforts would be complementary and contribute to develop the cotton sub-sector both as a competitive world supplier and participant in the textiles supply chain, and as part of a diversified and dynamic rural sector in the region.
4. It was agreed in the concluding discussions that, collaboration should be undertaken over the coming months among all the key actors on both the country side and the donor partners, with a view to forging a coherent, actionable approach that is ready for implementation at international, regional and national levels. All parties recognised in this connection the importance of WTO Consultations on the development aspects of cotton in June and September 2005, with a view also to contributing to the preparations for the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong (December 2006). Making progress on cotton will be critical to the success of the Doha Round and will also be important for addressing issues relating to other strategic commodities for the developing world.
5. The Chair's concluding remarks are in Annex 1 of this note. The following summary highlights key points from the presentations and discussions organised according to the three sessions.

Session I – Challenges and Opportunities for African Cotton Producers and Traders In Light Of the WTO and Other Negotiations.

6. This session, chaired by Mr. Jean-Marie Metzger, Director of the Trade Directorate, provided an update on (1) the status of the WTO agricultural negotiations, (2) the place of cotton and other key commodities in EU-ACP Economic Partnership Agreements in West Africa; as well as (3) an overview of global market trends in cotton production and trade and a reflection of the possible impact of changes in the external trade environment on African cotton producers and exporters.

7. Participants stressed the need to give highest priority to tackling the trade dimensions of the cotton issue, in particular, to take action on cotton subsidies in the context of the WTO Doha Development Round. It was recognised that this would have only medium- to long term impacts¹, but commitment to taking action in this area was considered central to the successful resolution of the WTO negotiations on agriculture. The Chair of the WTO negotiating bodies on agriculture and cotton expressed optimism in seeing progress, especially since the July package agreement, although he cautioned that the negotiations would not go forward on the basis of agriculture alone. He emphasised that negotiations are about long term positive reform and cannot address the short term problems of the continuing downward spiral of world cotton prices. The short term problems would require a strong response from the donor community.

8. It was recalled that the DAC Briefing was organised as a response to the request by the WTO in recognition of the difficulties of the cotton producing countries. Fostering a partnership between the trade and development communities and supporting the African cotton producing countries in a co-ordinated and integrated manner would also be critical for a successful WTO Ministerial in Hong Kong later this year. The meeting highlighted the threat to the viability of the cotton sub-sector, despite the high quality of African cotton, and stressed that the plummeting world prices would have significant impacts on development efforts.

9. The discussion highlighted the important regional dimensions of cotton. It was pointed out that the early approaches by the EU to supporting trade from the ACP countries had failed to encourage export diversification, local processing of commodities and further liberalisation and integration into the world economy. The EU Economic Partnership Agreements would build on these lessons from the past and base its partnership on three elements (1) comprehensive approaches to development including to address supply side constraints, (2) regional integration, including south-south-north co-operation, as a first step towards gradual integration into the world economy, and (3) WTO compatibility, incorporating elements such as flexibility, variable speed and geometry. A *Regional Preparatory Task Force* would be put in place to ensure an effective bridge between the trade and development components and to help implement this in a context of mainstreaming trade into development priorities of partner countries.

10. The importance of the cotton sub-sector was emphasised by many participants with regard to its contribution to growth, employment and export revenues. In light of the current market trends as described by the World Bank - mainly, declining cotton prices, high price variability and the decline of the cotton's share in total fiber consumption- it was highlighted that cotton would have to be better integrated into regional agricultural policy with specific emphasis on enhancing competitiveness, strengthening processing capacity, fostering diversification and ensuring environmental sustainability, all with a view to maximising the contribution of cotton to development and poverty reduction. Other dimensions of the cotton "problem" included an uneven use of biotechnology, increasing competition from chemical fibres, high degree of

1. The World Bank highlighted in this regard that no major changes or reforms pertaining to subsidies to the cotton sector were currently expected in the U.S. before 2007 (introduction of a new U.S. Farm Bill). In addition, EU reforms regarding decoupling would only be effective in 2006.

dependence on cotton and limited use of niche markets. The importance of domestic reforms was emphasised, in particular the need to further rationalise the industry.

Session II – Cotton: How Important Is It And How Is It Reflected In National And Regional Development And Poverty Reduction Strategies?

11. This session, chaired by Mr. Stefan Tangermann, Director of the OECD Agriculture Directorate, aimed to (1) build a better understanding of the economic and social importance of cotton production and trade for key African countries, regional development and intra-regional trade; (2) examine national and regional cotton sector development and policy reform programmes; and (3) assess how these are reflected in national and regional development policies and poverty reduction strategies.

12. Presentations and discussions highlighted in more detail the strategic social and economic importance of cotton for West Africa. Indeed, cotton constitutes a high proportion of national foreign exchange earnings in West African countries (more than 50% in Burkina Faso). In addition, by providing small farmers with access to inputs, to agricultural innovation and upstream and downstream services, and by promoting institutional development such as producer organisations, it has stimulated a broader process of agricultural transformation. The cotton sub-sector– which has traditionally coordinated provision of credit, inputs, extension services, marketing and access to infrastructure (*e.g.* roads, health centres and schools), has been particularly strong in the Franc CFA zone for historical reasons. Furthermore, there is evidence from Benin, Burkina Faso and Mali that confirms the linkage between cotton and cereal production (such as sorghum, millet and maize), through sharing inputs across fields. Production of cereals in these zones could be threatened by a collapse of the cotton sub-sector and therefore have major impacts on the food security and poverty levels in these countries.²

13. Participants confirmed that an important crisis was facing the cotton sub-sector and that it was getting worse – with huge balance-of-payments deficits faced by West African countries this year. West Africa is vulnerable to external shocks, *e.g.* the depreciation of the US dollar, which decreased the value of West African cotton in world markets, coupled with the rising price of oil. African delegates underlined the need to develop measures to reinvigorate the cotton sub-sector. In this context, senior African delegates raised the need for urgent action to mitigate the current impacts of cotton price falls and OECD export subsidies on West African economies. Mali stated that its current deficit due to falling cotton receipts is estimated at 45 billion CFA; West Africans argued that most of this loss was due to OECD country subsidies. They therefore highlighted the need to eliminate subsidies in the medium term and to provide support to their cotton sub-sectors in the short term.

14. African country speakers outlined a number of domestic reforms their governments had started implementing. Each country representative accepted the need for cotton sub-sector reforms and presented details of the progress of reforms in their countries. These include actions to liberalize, privatize and “professionalize” the sub-sector, as to enhance its competitiveness and contribution to GDP; increase private sector/producer organization participation and state disengagement in the management of the sub-sector and encourage greater private investments.³ Mali felt that where reforms had been too rapid in

2. Further materials on the importance of cotton in West Africa prepared by the SWAC, producer organisations, regional and international institutions, can be consulted on the following web-pages: <http://www.oecd.org/sah> (click on cotton icon). Future SWAC work includes inter-alia: (1) Launching fieldwork on the changing role of cotton in producer livelihoods in key West African countries; (2) Dissemination of the overview paper on the economic and social importance of cotton production and trade in West Africa, and (3) Finalising and disseminating the SWAC's work on access to agricultural innovation and the feasibility study on assessing trade and agricultural policy impacts in West Africa - both of which contain material on the importance of cotton in West Africa.

3. See presentations and background documents on www.oecd.org/dac/trade/cotton.

African cotton producing countries, there have often been disastrous consequences for the country's economy. Hence it has extended the period over which reforms should be implemented. In Burkina Faso, far-reaching reforms proposed include removal of the monopoly of the national cotton company SOFITEX and giving producer organisations and the private sector a large stake in new regional cotton companies. For example, UNPCB will have a 20% stake in the new cotton company covering the Western region of Burkina Faso. Benin recognized the need for greater efforts in domestic reforms, as well as the necessity to diversify growth sources and competitive (sub-)sectors. However, in the context of severe downward price pressure on cotton farmers, impacting heavily on their incomes, cotton producers were actively demanding state intervention and support. Some also emphasised the need to strengthen regional processing capacity in West Africa. This idea is promoted by West African regional organisations including WAEMU and BOAD. They aim to increase investment in regional cotton processing industries to increase the amount of cotton processed from 5% to 25% by 2015.

15. Burkina Faso made a strong plea to donors to financially support the implementation of its cotton plan. In the absence of such support, and with continued low cotton prices (lower than the cost of production), Burkina Faso and Benin feared that producers would have no more incentive to produce cotton. West African participants highlighted that the collapse of the "cotton system" in their countries will have serious effects on the livelihoods and well-being of millions of people in cotton growing countries. This will occur through lower incomes, but also through less investment in services (health, education, roads...).

16. In addition, Benin, Burkina Faso and Mali outlined how they had incorporated cotton sub-sector priorities into their PRSPs.

17. Ultimately, West African representatives made a number of concrete suggestions to address the development aspects of cotton in the short and medium to longer term.⁴ These include:

- Establishing an **emergency fund**, *i.e.* an income safety net for LDC cotton producers and households, that would expire when the effects of the resolution of the subsidies issues in the WTO were felt on the ground by cotton producers; provide funding decoupled from production and be managed in a transparent and accountable way, preferably by the World Bank.
- Strengthening **sector reform programmes** and other domestic reform processes, with the help of the donor community.
- Increasing awareness regarding recent progress in research & technology, establishing regulatory mechanisms and fostering adoption of recent **technological progress** in cotton production (*e.g.* GMO technology), in order to maintain cost-efficiency and competitiveness.

18. They also recalled the need for a comprehensive approach to the cotton issue (involving short and longer term measures), for greater policy coherence between developed country trade and development policies, and a firm commitment to find a solution to the subsidies issue in the frame of multilateral negotiations.

Session III – Development Assistance for the African Sub-Sector: Maximizing Aid Effectiveness

19. Session III, chaired by Mr. Richard Manning, DAC Chairman, focused on progress achieved since the WTO Cotonou Workshop (22-24/03/2004) and WTO July Package (1/08/2004) in the design,

4. See Conclusions of the Meeting Proposed by African Country Representatives and presentations by Mali and Burkina Faso that can be downloaded from www.oecd.org/dac/trade/cotton.

implementation and co-ordination of donor assistance programmes for effectively promoting the sustainable development of the cotton sector in Africa.

20. Donors have long been assisting the development of the West African cotton sub-sector. The discussions demonstrated, however, that donors have intensified their efforts to assist the further development and competitiveness of the cotton sub-sector as part of the agreement for progressing on the Doha Round.⁵ The **African Development Bank**, the **US** and the **EC and the ACP Group** outlined comprehensive proposals for helping the West African countries through cooperative multilateral efforts. These proposals include a wide range of activities in line with the *Areas of Focus* identified at the WTO Cotonou Workshop⁶, including assistance to address price risks and volatility through market-based hedging and insurance schemes (e.g. the International Task Force on Commodity Risk Management).⁷ More detail follows:

21. The **AfDB's** proposal for a *Multinational Programme for Enhancing the Competitiveness of the Cotton Sub-Sector in West and Central Africa*, to be designed by FAO and implemented by WAEMU, will focus on enhancing: (i) institutional capacities needed for quality control, marketing, logistics, etc., (ii) production and productivity, and (iii) industrial and commercial business development, with the aim of attracting more private investment in the cotton sub-sector. The programme's specificity lies in its *regional* aspect: programmers will attempt to identify common (regional) actions and assistance projects, to be implemented in a number of West African countries. AfDB is seeking co-financing, including through a consultative donor group meeting planned for June 2005 in collaboration with the WTO Secretariat.

22. The **US** highlighted several US Government *inter-agency* efforts as follow up to the WTO Cotonou Workshop including actions by USAID, the US Dept. of Agriculture, the US Trade Representative and the Dept. of State. Components include (i) support for enhancing overall agricultural productivity and rural development in these countries, (ii) carrying out a *West African Cotton Assessment* in Sept-Oct. 2004 in Benin, Mali, Burkina Faso and Chad followed by a (iii) short-term development assistance package with other donors aligned around partner country priorities. This package is expected to be completed in June 2005. The US will also support the organization of a Conference on Biotechnology in response to request from partner countries (planned for June 2005 in Bamako, Mali) to help them develop bio-safety regulations. The US also called for greater collaboration with other donors (e.g. the EC, AfDB) and multilateral agencies and IFIs (e.g. the World Bank) in the implementation of a *longer-term* development assistance package emerging from the Assessment, inviting other donors/agencies to make use of the assessment report.

23. The **US** noted, in addition, that partner countries could also apply to the US *Millennium Challenge Corporation* –MCC (Benin and Mali are both eligible for the FY 2004-5; and both have submitted proposals, while Burkina Faso is a “threshold country”, *i.e.* has been invited to improve performance on a number of indicators in order to be eligible for MCC support. The US is also supporting the NEPAD and G8 processes and collaboration with other development assistance agencies to strengthen West Africa's agriculture sector.

24. The **EC and ACP Secretariat** presented progress of the *EU-Africa Cotton Partnership*, endorsed by the EU Council in April 2004, and its related Action Plan, agreed upon in July 2004. The Partnership is comprehensive programme targeted at ACP countries, covering 7 different areas of action (e.g. assistance

5. See also the First Period Report of the WTO DG on the Implementation of the Development Assistance Aspects of the Cotton-related Decision in the July Package, (WT/GC/83), 3 December 2004.

6. See Summary Report of the WTO Cotonou Workshop (WT/L/564).

7. See relevant presentations and background documents posted on www.oecd.org/dac/trade/cotton.

for international trade negotiations, enhanced institutional capacities, technological innovation, etc.) and involving a *wide array* of donor and partner stakeholders (*e.g.* EU Member States, World Bank and other IFIs, UNCTAD, FAO, national African governments and farmers/private sector associations, ACP group, ICAC, ROPPA, etc.).

25. The *EU-Africa Action Plan*, steered by a joint EU-ACP Steering Committee, has advanced beyond the assessment stage and includes specific medium-term expected results, inputs/activities and allocation of responsibilities.⁸ Funds for its implementation have already been secured. Ambassador Hinvi, Chair of the ACP Group, suggested to invite additional donors and agencies to feed into the Action Plan and participate in future EU-Africa Cotton Steering Committee meetings - which could improve donor co-ordination. Ultimately, he suggested using the Plan as *the* common donor-partner framework for the co-ordinated delivery and monitoring of coherent and complementary medium- to longer-term development assistance programmes targeted at the cotton sector in ACP countries. The US, Swiss, French, ITC/JITAP and Mali representatives welcomed that suggestion. Some partners, moreover, urged the Steering Committee to urgently “operationalize” the Action Plan, as it had still not identified any specific donor assistance programmes or actions.

26. It was noted that potential recipient countries seemed to face difficulties with the formulation of specific requests to donors (donor projects/programme proposals), which might explain why no assistance programmes or projects had been actually delivered so far.

27. Ensuring coherence and co-ordination at the national, regional and international level was accorded high priority: While participants agreed that all efforts were useful and complementary, they stressed that coordination needed urgently to be improved. Development assistance programmes should be further harmonised and aligned with the regional efforts of the West African countries (*cf.* strategies and proposals by ECOWAS, AfDB/WAEMU and BOAD) and the countries’ poverty reduction strategies. Most participants agreed that a sufficient number of diagnostic studies and missions had been carried out. It was now time to take action based on the assessments.

28. In addition, partner countries reiterated the need for short term financial assistance (emergency fund)⁹, alongside medium to longer-term development assistance. Most donors present –except Switzerland- could not commit on the spot to set up a new emergency fund, though some noted that the use of existing instruments (*e.g.* EC’s FLEX) could be considered to help address short-term needs. Some cautioned that such a fund would not solve price volatility problems, which are recurrent for most commodities.

29. The meeting recognised the importance of the alignment and co-ordination mechanisms already in place, including the *EU-Africa Cotton Partnership*, which had the potential to be widened to other parties, and to the *JITAP*.

8. See www.cotton-forum.org for more informaton.

9. See Proposed Conclusions by the African countries’ representatives, posted on www.oecd.org/dac/trade/cotton.

**ANNEX 1:
DAC CHAIR STATEMENT**

1. The *DAC Briefing on the Development Dimensions of African Cotton* brought together key stakeholders from donor and multilateral agencies, international financial institutions (IFIs), regional organizations and development banks, as well as Ministers and other senior representatives of African countries involved in cotton production and trade.

2. The main objectives were to: (1) Examine how the cotton sub-sector is reflected in development policies and poverty reduction strategies, in light of the importance of cotton production and trade for the development of some African countries; (2) Share information on emerging approaches to development assistance programmes targeted at the cotton sector and examine the extent to which the latter are incorporated in agency Country Assistance Programmes, in light of the WTO July Framework Decision; (3) Discuss how to apply lessons of alignment and harmonization to the design and delivery of assistance programmes for the cotton and other related sectors, in order to increase aid effectiveness.

3. This meeting continued a process of consultations on the development dimensions of the West African cotton sub-sector issues. These issues are an agreed priority in the Doha Development Round of Trade Negotiations, and strategically important to the success of those negotiations. The meeting recognised that its discussion of development dimensions in no way detracted from the need for a solution to the trade issues under discussions in the Doha Development Round. The meeting was addressed by Ambassador Tim Groser, Chairman of the WTO negotiating bodies on agriculture and cotton who underlined the importance of resolving the issue of cotton subsidies to the success of the Doha Development Round. He also drew attention to the immediate issues of declining world prices and domestic reform needs that required a strong and early response on the part of the donor community.

4. The WTO Secretariat stressed the value-added of this briefing to preparations for the Hong Kong WTO Ministerial Meeting of December 2005. The Director-General had presented a First Periodic report to the WTO General Council in December 2004, concluding that good progress was being made, but more needs to be done. The WTO Secretariat informed the meeting that it would convene additional consultations in June and September 2005, the results of which would provide the inputs for the Second Periodic report by the Director-General to the Hong Kong Ministerial on the further progress on the development assistance aspects of cotton.

5. Cotton and the related cotton support system have played a central role in a successful agricultural revolution in West Africa since the 1970s, when the Sahel region was crippled by drought and famine. Cotton production has increased significantly, generating many economic multipliers and social advances in the region. These include, for example, the stimulation of cereals production to meet regional demand, the creation of new institutions including producer organisations, the expansion of the road infrastructure and of social infrastructure such as schools and clinics. These basic contributions to the regional economy have helped to engender and underpin the positive political developments in the cotton producing countries in the West African region. Overall, cotton has been at the centre of one of the most important success stories in Africa over the last three decades. If the cotton sub-sector collapses this would harm development efforts.

6. Short and medium term development measures are required to address the current difficulties faced by the cotton sub-sector. Commitment to major action on cotton subsidies in the context of Doha Development Round will have an impact only over the medium to long term. Meanwhile, West African cotton producers face a major crisis of low world prices, which pose an immediate threat to the viability of their cotton sub-sector.

7. In this light and with prospects that world cotton prices will continue to drop, the representatives of the West African countries to the meeting made a proposal for a special emergency fund to be used to establish an income safety net for the period until world trade reforms are able to impact on the international cotton market balances and strengthen world price levels. This proposal included provisions for sectoral reform and multilateral conditionality. Reservations were expressed about the concept of a new fund, though some donors noted that use of existing instruments, including market-based instruments could be applied to the challenge of cotton price volatility and decline.

8. The West African producer countries are engaged in major reform processes and rationalisation of their cotton sub-sectors. This involves a shift in the role of the state from monopoly roles in marketing to setting policy and regulatory frameworks, involving all actors in the sub-sector, and supporting research and services to improve the competitiveness of the cotton sub-sector. Progress with these reforms is a key requirement for the continued development of the cotton sub-sector and for effective assistance programmes, including in the short term.

9. The regional dimension of cotton was acknowledged as critical to the development of the sub-sector, agriculture as a whole, and trade. Regional integration and regional infrastructure was acknowledged as central to achieving trade and development objectives. Regional organizations in Africa therefore play key roles in this effort to ensure that the comparative advantage of the region in cotton is exploited as the basis of the strong competitive advantage in the world market for fibres, with a recognised brand image and strong positions in regional and world textile supply chains.

10. Donors have long been assisting the development of the West African cotton sub-sector. As part of the agreement for progressing the Doha Round, donors are intensifying their efforts to assist the further development of the cotton sub-sector and its competitiveness. DAC members and multilateral organisations signalled the high political priority they accord to working with the West African countries on the cotton sub-sector development issues. At the meeting, the EU, the US and the African Development Bank outlined comprehensive medium term action plans for helping the West African countries through co-operative multilateral efforts. These proposals include programmes to address price risks and volatility through market-based hedging and insurance schemes.

11. While the meeting agreed that all these efforts are complementary, it was also acknowledged that coordination needed to be stepped-up, including action at the operational level. They could be further harmonised and aligned with the regional efforts of the West African countries and the countries' poverty reduction strategies to develop the cotton sub-sector both as a competitive world supplier and participant in the textiles supply chain, and as part of a diversified and dynamic rural sector in the region. The meeting recognised the co-ordination efforts already in place, including the EU-Africa Cotton Partnership, which had the potential to be widened to other parties.

12. It was agreed that over the coming months, collaboration should be undertaken among all the key actors on both the country side and the donor partners, with a view to forging a coherent, actionable approach that is ready for implementation at international, regional and national levels. All parties recognised in this connection the importance of WTO Consultations on the development assistance aspects of Cotton in June and September 2005, with a view also to contributing to the preparations for the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong.

**ANNEX 2:
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

Chairman / Chairman

M. Jean-Marie METZGER

*Director
TRADE DIRECTORATE
OECD*

Mr. Stefan TANGERMANN

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*US Representative to the DAC
Permanent Delegation*

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*USAID Mission Director
USAID*

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Délégation Permanente*

M. Philippe BEYRIES

Ministère de l'agriculture

M. Philippe CHEDANNE

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DREE
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