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SIGNATORIES TERMINATE WTO PLURILATERAL AGREEMENTS ON MEAT AND DAIRY PRODUCTS

In the interest of economy and efficiency, the International Meat Council and the International Dairy Council, today (30 September), agreed to terminate, respectively, the WTO International Bovine Meat Agreement and the WTO International Dairy Agreement at the end of 1997.

Parties to the two plurilateral agreements said that the establishment of the WTO Committees on Agriculture and on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, which deal with trade policy-related matters affecting agricultural products including meat and dairy products, had cast doubts on the continued usefulness of the Meat and Dairy Agreements.

Regarding the supply of market information on meat and dairy products--a major function of the Meat and Dairy Councils--the parties noted that they could rely on information prepared regularly by national and intergovernmental bodies.

For the reasons above, and considering the "resource constraints faced by governments as well as the Secretariat", the parties decided to request the WTO Ministerial Conference to delete the two agreements from the list of plurilateral agreements annexed to the WTO Agreement.

There are two other plurilateral agreements annexed to the WTO Agreement: the Agreement on Government Procurement and the Agreement on Trade in Civil Aircraft.

Note to Editors:

The Arrangement Regarding Bovine Meat and the International Dairy Arrangement came into operation on 1 January 1980 after the Tokyo Round with the objective of expanding and liberalizing world trade in their respective sectors. Both plurilateral agreements--renamed the International Bovine Meat Agreement and the International Dairy Agreement--were annexed to the WTO Agreement.

The WTO International Meat Council supervises the International Bovine Meat Agreement. It evaluates the world supply and demand situation for meat, and provides a forum for regular consultation on all matters affecting international trade in bovine meat (beef, veal and live cattle), including bilateral and plurilateral commitments on trade in this sector. The following are members of the Council: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad, Colombia, the European Communities (15), Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Romania, South Africa, Switzerland, the United States and Uruguay.

The WTO International Dairy Council oversees the implementation of the International Dairy Agreement, which covers all dairy products and lays down minimum export prices for international trade in certain milk powders, milk fat including butter, and certain cheeses. In October 1995, the Council suspended the operation of minimum export prices, noting that the limited membership in the Agreement, and in particular the non-participation of some major dairy exporting countries, had made the operation of the minimum-price provisions untenable. The following are parties to the agreement: Argentina, Bulgaria, Chad, the EC (15), Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Romania, Switzerland and Uruguay.

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