
Rendez-vous de midi

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NOTE BIO AUX BUREAUX NATIONAUX**cc. aux Membres du Service du Porte-Parole****Rendez-vous de midi**

(suite - P. Guilford)

Hormones

OFF THE RECORD : The Commission will present its notice of Appeal to the WTO against the hormones panel today, using the following arguments among others: 1) the panel interpreted incorrectly the SPS Agreement, denying the EU its sovereign right to set food safety standards at the level it deems appropriate. 2) The Codex Alimentarius was designed as a set of voluntary minimum standards for countries to aim for, not a legally binding threshold above which WTO countries must show that the weight of scientific evidence is on their side if they are to avoid prosecution. Such a strict reading of Codex risks bringing food standards down to the lowest common denominator. 3) The EU has presented the views of the best scientists in the world but their evidence was for the most part overlooked. Of the 5 scientists picked by the panel, 2 said there was sufficient risk to human health to warrant a hormone ban. The EU's Appeal does not constitute a loss of faith in the WTO dispute settlement system - quite the opposite. The EU continues to support the procedures of the WTO fully. A final judgement from the Appeals Body is likely to come around mid December.

China WTO

During talks with the USTR in Washington, Sir Leon Brittan and Mrs Barshefsky noted that the EU and US objectives for Chinese membership of the WTO are pretty close on most of the main points, and that both sides urge China to make serious concessions in order to advance the talks. Further movement must come from the Chinese. Accession will not be achieved through a series of political gestures, but through acceptance of clear, objective rules and meaningful market access.

Helms-Burton

Sir Leon presented a tough line to the United States, warning them that real progress must be made in time for the October 15 deadline. He reacted with disappointment to the poor progress of talks on investment in Paris last week (a key part of the Helms-Burton negotiations), and hoped more would be achieved during further negotiations next week.

Bananas

The WTO will endorse the result of the Appeal in the banana ruling today. The EU will seek as far as possible to state its intended reaction to losing the Appeal, at the October 25 WTO meeting. The EU will