

Press Release

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WWF & OXFAM: European Commission's sugar plan will not end destructive regime

Brussels, Belgium –The European Commission's sugar reform proposals will not reduce poverty or achieve higher environmental standards, said OXFAM and WWF today. The international development agency and the global conservation organisation warned that the proposed reforms would allow continued export dumping on developing countries, thereby undermining poor farmers' livelihoods.

The EC released a communication today on the reform of the sugar regime, the first step in the sugar reform process.

“Despite what Commissioner Fischler says, the proposal has nothing to do with poverty alleviation or environmental concerns. After decades of waiting for reform, this is a half-hearted effort,” said Elizabeth Guttentstein, Head of WWF Agriculture program.

“Today's proposal shows that the EU has shut its ears to the needs of developing countries and placed the interests of big farmers and processing companies ahead of everything else. This plan will not end export dumping and will not solve the problem as we see it,” said Jo Leadbeater, Head of Oxfam International's Brussels Office.

OXFAM and WWF want to see the following as part of the sugar reform:

- The immediate elimination of EU export subsidies, direct and indirect, leading to the end of EU sugar export dumping
- An increase in imports from the poorest countries at remunerative prices
- A cut in EU production to eliminate overproduction and allow for increased imports. Oxfam and WWF estimate that this would require a cut of between 33 and 40 per cent
- Support to help developing countries improve environmental sustainability and labour rights in their sugar industries
- Urgent agreement on an action plan on compensation and transitional arrangements for African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries who incur losses due to reform
- Protection for small-scale farmers in Europe from sharp adjustment costs
- Reorientation of EU agricultural policies in favour of small farmers, the environment, and social equity

Later this month the WTO will announce the interim ruling in the case against EU sugar subsidies presented by Brazil, Thailand and Australia. Oxfam and WWF argue that today's EC proposal has not done enough to protect them from defeat.

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