



Independent Merchant Group

'ACORN Merchants Warn of WTO Disaster for Agriculture'

Issue Date: 16th April 2008

The six members of the ACORN Independent Merchant Group are:

Brett Brothers
Limited,
Callan,
Co. Kilkenny
Tel: 056 7755300

Kevin Cooney Group,
Raheenduff,
Oulart,
Gorey, Co. Wexford
Tel: 05391 36107

J. Grennan & Sons,
Rath,
Birr,
Co. Offaly
Tel: 05791 33002

McDonnell Bros.
(Agricultural Suppliers) Ltd.,
Coolagown,
Fermoy, Co. Cork
Tel: 025 31166

Liffey Mills,
Bunnow,
Roscrea,
Co. Tipperary
Tel: 0505 21477

Quinns of Baltinglass Ltd.,
Baltinglass,
Co. Wicklow
Tel: 05964 81266

The ACORN Independent Merchants, which consists of eight of the leading privately-owned grain and animal feed merchants in the country, have this week called on the Irish Government to defend our most important indigenous industry, and to resist an unfavourable world trade deal. The future of EU and Ireland's agriculture and food sectors is increasingly dependent on the global trading environment. Agreeing to a bad WTO deal would carry hugely deleterious implications for both the EU and Ireland's agricultural sectors.

Our Agriculture Minister Mary Coughlan says that the European agri-food sector 'must not be sacrificed for the sake of a deal'. However strong words have totally failed to stop EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson in the negotiation talks to date, and Mandelson has already gone far beyond the mandate given to him by the EU. ACORN Merchants strongly urge our Government to take a leading position, and to actively secure the support of our EU partners to stop Mandelson's sell-out of farming and the food industry. The French Agriculture Minister and President Sarkozy have recently voiced their grave concerns about the Geneva WTO negotiations, and France would prove to be a staunch ally with Ireland, in defending European agriculture.

Under the current proposals beef production would undoubtedly be worst hit, and the future viability of both milk and cereal production would also be grossly undermined. Major cuts in import tariffs carry huge repercussions - 70% cuts for beef and dairy products, and from 55% to 70% for cereals, lamb, pigmeat and poultry. Europe is the largest exporter of value-added agricultural food products in the world, and it is vitally important that our competitive position is not jeopardized.

At a time when major opportunities are presenting themselves in terms of climate change, population increase, rising global food demand and biofuel production, it is extremely concerning that Irish and European agriculture faces the threat of decimation. Analysts predict that by 2050 the world's population will stand at 9 billion people, and accordingly world food production must double. European agriculture should be looking ahead to growing our levels of food production and productivity at a time when world food stock levels are extremely low. Food security should be a top priority for Europe.

The current WTO proposals negotiated by Mandelson are totally 'unbalanced' and are a serious threat to Irish and EU agriculture. ACORN Merchants are calling on the Irish Government to act - and to act now - in the best interest of all Irish and European citizens to veto Mandelson's current WTO proposals

Chairman: Mr. Denis McDonnell (Joint MD McDonnell Bros.)

Vice-Chairman: Mr. Pat Ryan (MD Liffey Mills)

Spokesperson: Mr. Pat Murphy (General Manager, ACORN) Tel: 086 7739730