

Doha deal can help resolve food crisis: WTO

The head of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) said Wednesday that the multilateral trade body must help provide a solution to the spreading global food crisis.

In his report to the General Council at WTO headquarters in Geneva, Director-General Pascal Lamy said concluding the Doha Round of trade talks to dismantle barriers and cut tariffs was 'becoming more critical by the day'.

He said: 'The reasons why we must conclude the round this year are visible to all of us. The WTO can provide part of the solution.'

After turbulence in world financial markets, rocketing food prices had created new pressures and fuelled food riots in some countries heavily dependent on food imports.

The Doha Round of talks, known as the development round, has collapsed several times in the six and a half years since it was launched due to endless squabbling by rich and poor countries.

Lamy said it was important to reach a deal this year and do away with trade distorting barriers that stifled food production and new investment particularly in developing countries.

He said: 'This is a very tight schedule, but it is still doable.'

A meeting of trade ministers was planned later this month in Geneva but a date has still not been set.

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