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From: Albury Wodonga Environment Centre [SMTP:awec@start.com.au]
Sent: Wednesday, September 13, 2000 3:27 PM
To: jsct@aph.gov.au
Subject: Comment on Australia's relationship with WTO

The Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Parliament House
Canberra ACT

Dear Madam/Sir,

social, cultural and environmental considerations are priorities in any decision relating to Australia's involvement with the WTO. Workers and people in general must be placed before profit.

In a basic example, traditional Indian aromatic basmati rice has been patented by an American company under the patent rights regulations introduced under the new free trade regime. This prevents traditional producers of basmati rice from exporting their product in favour of a large transnational corporation. Australia should not support the WTO in its decision to allow this kind of patenting to occur.

The continuing destruction of Australia's native forests for export woodchips must also be appreciated when looking at Australia's relationship with the WTO. Multinational companies should not be permitted to destroy Australia's natural environment for the benefit of developed countries in the Northern Hemisphere.

Finally, the spread of genetically modified food crops, directly linked to multinational companies, must be critically analysed when looking into Australia's relationship with the WTO. The spread of genetically modified (GM) crops through World Trade is not acceptable for environmental and social reasons.

The environmental risks associated with GM crops, such as a loss of biodiversity, are not worth taking. Additionally GM crops are patented by multinational companies, who therefore own rights to the crops grown by farmers throughout the world. This will again remove power from local producers and place it in the hands of transnational corporations.

We hope you consider these simple but fundamental issues when conducting your inquiry.

Regards

Albury Wodonga Environment Centre