

WTO Fisheries Subsidies Negotiations: Progress and Issues from February 2009 to April 2011

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Summary

As part of the WTO Doha Round, a series of discussions have been underway to develop the discipline of fisheries subsidies with a view to restraining overcapacity and overfishing. At present, significant differences remain in Members' positions across a range of issues. This paper sets out the outstanding issues among Members, by reviewing preceding academic studies on this topic and the papers presented during the negotiations, in particular those from February 2009 to April 2011, which preceding studies did not adequately cover. Both from economic and fisheries management perspectives and from legal and institutional standpoints, subjects ranging from the macro to micro levels are identified for further exploration. These include the causal relationships between subsidies and overcapacity/overfishing as well as a possible mechanism by which the discipline could contribute to fisheries resource management. While the subjects identified are given preliminary consideration, a more in-depth examination would offer useful indicators for future negotiations and for the design of the discipline.