

## WORLD EXPORT DEVELOPMENT FORUM – W·E·D·F 2008

### PLENARY BRAINSTORMING: EMBRACING CONSUMER CONSCIENCE: A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO EXPORT DEVELOPMENT

#### **The Issue:**

The market for ethical goods and services has been growing and is likely to continue doing so. Even if it remains a relatively small part of all trade, for most developing countries the market is a sizeable one. Ethical trade thus represents a significant value proposition that can help developing countries differentiate, and command a leading share of the global market.

For most developing countries, however, the challenges associated with winning the ethical market are considerable.

#### **The Proposition:**

A proactive strategic approach to export development that embraces consumer conscience must specifically address the following:

- Exports which respond to consumer conscience with respect to developmental impact
- Exports that are based on non-exploitable production systems and are non-discriminatory, exclude child or forced labour, are safe and hygienic, and provide adequate remuneration for all workers
- Exports that result in the net creation of new jobs, the majority of them for women
- Exports that connect people with natural resources sustainably, rather than alienating them from their environments
- Exports that are less detrimental or, even better, are beneficial to the natural environment through the production and consumption stages.
- Exports that are compatible with meeting food security goals
- Exports that are links in international global chains and exports from larger multinational companies which utilize the outputs of micro, small and medium enterprises
- Exports that promote complementary and interdependence amongst developing countries and develop regional markets
- Exports of goods and services from micro, small and medium enterprises that are profitable
- Exports to growing, rather than stagnating, global markets

In short, exporters in developing countries need to be able to meet demand-side requirements. To do so, developing countries must focus their strategic thrusts on strengthening their supply-side capacities and on fostering an environment that is conducive to doing business. In doing so, developing countries must ensure that there are developmental benefits for the country, including poverty reduction, a more equitable distribution of gains and protection of the environment, among others.

Indeed, these are not new challenges for developing countries.

#### **Focus of the debate:**

The debate will address the following questions:

1. What are the key ingredients of a strategic approach to export development that embraces consumer conscience? How are they different to traditional strategic initiatives?
2. What are the roles of the public sector, the trade support network and enterprises in targeting the ethical market?
3. How must the donors and international technical assistance agencies respond to enable developing countries secure a larger share of the ethical market?