



Trade Justice Bulletin

July 2022

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1. Introduction

Dear Members,

Earlier this month, we reported that the **World Trade Organisation (WTO)** had made a weak decision to put the profits of Big Pharma ahead of the lives of millions of people around the world.

But this wasn't the only WTO decision this month which will impact our communities: in a major conference, the WTO also established new trading rules on **fishing** and **agriculture**.

In this month's Trade Justice Bulletin, we're bringing you an analysis on how these WTO decisions will affect people and the planet.

We also had a preliminary meeting with Assistant Trade Minister **Tim Ayres**, and have sought a meeting with Trade Minister **Don Farrell**, seeking implementation of Labor policy on a more transparent and democratic process, and raising specific issues about trade deals signed (but not yet ratified) with the UK and India.

All the best,

The AFTINET Team.

P.S. Did you know you can now leave a gift in your will to carry on the fight for trade justice? [Learn more](#) about how a gift in your will can help make an impact.

2. AFTINET tells the press: WTO decision on COVID19 medicines monopolies falls short

Following the 'cop-out' WTO decision on COVID19 medicines monopolies, AFTINET went to the press to warn that the agreement will fail to address global inequities in access to vaccines, tests, and treatments.

Speaking to [SBS News](#), AFTINET Convenor **Dr Patricia Ranald** explained: "Our concern is that this will not enable the actual production of more vaccines and treatments, and we'll still have a situation where the majority of low-income countries have very low rates of vaccination... which will prolong the pandemic."

Dr Ranald also told the [Sydney Morning Herald](#) that the interests of the pharmaceutical companies were behind the disappointing outcome, saying that the EU, UK and Switzerland fought the waiver proposal at the request of Big Pharma: "[Pharma] already made an enormous amount of money... They've had the monopoly for two years. Research and development was subsidised by governments, so it's not that pharmaceutical companies had to take a big risk."

3. What impact will the WTO's 12th Ministerial Conference have on people and the planet?

Apart from the disappointing outcome on COVID19 medicines monopolies, the WTO also negotiated new rules to govern important areas of trade like fishing and agriculture.

The WTO agreed on a new set of rules that prohibit a number of harmful subsidies to unsustainable fishing practices. However, fisher advocates argue that the new rules let the biggest subsidisers off the hook by permitting a number of exceptions and loopholes.

Trade justice activists also say that the WTO has overlooked the root causes of food insecurity in its new agreement on agricultural trade, which tightens export bans on food (which some countries use to prevent critical food stocks from being sold abroad to the highest bidder).

The WTO said the agreement will help tackle the growing food crisis, but advocates argue that the deal ignores fundamental problems such as excessive subsidies to agribusiness in wealthy countries, speculative trading, and the over-use of grains for fuel and animal feed.

[Read our full analysis](#)

4. Labor's trade policy: towards trade justice?

AFTINET wrote to the new Trade Minister **Don Farrell** and Assistant Trade Minister **Tim Ayres**, and met with Senator Ayres in June. We have asked them to implement their policy on a more transparent trade negotiation and parliamentary process. We also raised specific issues about the Australia-UK FTA and the interim Australia-India agreements. We expect the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT) to review both of these agreements from early August, and will be visiting Canberra to meet with key parliamentarians in the first week of August.

Trade justice activists in Sydney came together this month at a **Politics in the Pub** event to discuss the prospects of progressing a trade justice agenda under the new Labor government. [Take a look at the recording here!](#)

5. AFTINET warns that claims in EU trade deal could reduce access to cheap medicines

Speaking to [ABC Radio National Drive](#), AFTINET Convenor Dr Patricia Ranald warned standards in the proposed trade deal with the EU may fall short of community expectations for high environmental and labour standards without strong enforcement mechanisms:

“The standards tend to be aspirational rather than legally enforceable in the same way as the rest of the agreement. We would argue that such standards should be legally enforceable.”

She also noted that the EU was seeking longer monopolies on medicines on behalf of its powerful pharmaceutical industry, and that AFTINET would continue to oppose this.

[Listen to the full interview](#)

6. Key UK committee demands more time to review Australia-UK FTA as Boris Johnson resigns

A key parliamentary committee in the UK has urged the British government to extend the period of scrutiny on the **Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement (A-UKFTA)**, after ministers were accused of pushing it through parliament without proper inspection.

Prior to Boris Johnson’s resignation, the trade committee had received an independent report from the **Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC)** confirming that the deal will lower environmental, food safety, and animal welfare standards.

In Australia, a review of the trade deal (signed in December 2021) by the **Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT)** was interrupted by the election. The JSCOT inquiry will resume over 20 sitting days after parliament sits at the beginning of August.

[Read the full story](#)

7. AFTINET in the news

- Interview with Dr Patricia Ranald on WTO medicine monopolies, [3CR Radio](#)
- We still need a vaccine patent waiver, but not the one on offer at the World Trade Organization meeting, [Croakey Health Media](#)
- Renewed call for TRIPS waiver on COVID-19 vaccines, [The Mandarin](#)
- Slow progress on vaccine deliveries to developing countries, [Sydney Morning Herald](#)
- ‘More people will die’: COVID-19 vaccine patent waiver falls short for developing world, experts say, [SBS News](#)
- Anthony Albanese optimistic about accelerating EU free trade talks, [ABC Radio National Drive](#)