

Name of Paper : THE HINDU

Published at : NEW DELHI

Dated : 13 MAY 2012

# U.S. moves WTO against India

**WASHINGTON:** The U.S. has approached the World Trade Organization (WTO), seeking a dispute settlement panel to decide American claims that Indian restrictions on imports of various U.S. agricultural products, including poultry meat and chicken eggs, were discriminatory.

The U.S. has approached the WTO after its talks with India failed to resolve the dispute between the two countries.

"It is essential that U.S. farmers obtain the reliable market access that India agreed to," U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk said.

"The United States holds its agriculture industry to the highest standards of safety and is confident the WTO will agree that there is no justification for India's restrictions

on U.S. exports," Mr. Kirk said. India asserts that its measures are aimed at preventing entry of avian influenza, but U.S. officials argue that the measures are inconsistent with the relevant science, international guidelines, and the standards India has set for its own domestic industry.

The U.S. requested formal consultations with India on March 7. The two countries and India held consultations on April 16-17, without resolution of the matter.

USTR officials said India was asserting that it had the right to impose import restrictions on countries whenever they reported outbreaks of low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI), the only kind of avian influenza found in the United States since 2004.

The relevant international guidelines as well as the relevant science did not support the imposition of measures of the type India was maintaining on account of LPAI, they said.

The WTO's Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) explicitly recognises that WTO Members have the right to adopt measures to protect human, animal, or plant life or health, they note. However, to ensure that SPS measures do not restrict imports unfairly, WTO Members agreed in the SPS Agreement to disciplines on such measures, U.S. officials say. USTR officials argue that India appears to have acted inconsistently with its obligations under the SPS Agreement. — PTI