WTO chief, UN food expert spar over right way to help world’s starving

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GENEVA — The head of the World Trade Organization and a U.N. food expert have exchanged testy messages in a public spat over how to help feed the world’s poor.

Olivier De Schutter, the U.N.’s expert on the right to food, accused WTO chief Pascal Lamy on Friday of advocating a trade-centric approach “that has failed spectacularly.”

De Shutter, a Harvard-educated lawyer based at the University of Louvain, Belgium, says food bills in the poorest countries jumped as much as sixfold from 1992 to 2008.

Many poor countries rely on large-scale imports even as domestic farmers struggle to compete on the open market.

Lamy says limiting food trade to safeguard domestic needs risks driving prices up even higher and “exacerbating the negative impacts on poor consumers.”

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