

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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## REPORT (1999) ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

The present report is being circulated by the Chairman of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures on his own responsibility. This report provides a summary of the activities and decisions of the Committee during 1999.

1. The Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the "SPS Committee") held two meetings in 1999: on 10-11 March and 7-8 July, and will hold a third meeting on 10-11 November.<sup>1</sup> At the July meeting, Mr. Attie Swart (South Africa) was appointed Chairman for 1999/2000.

2. At the March meeting, the SPS Committee adopted the Report on the Review of the SPS Agreement.<sup>2</sup> In general, the Report emphasizes that during the first three and a half years of implementation, the SPS Agreement had contributed to improving international trading relationships with respect to sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and that a number of SPS-related trade matters had been resolved following their discussion at formal meetings of the SPS Committee or bilaterally. A number of implementation issues gave concern to some Members, including a number of developing country Members. The Report more specifically reflects the SPS Committee's discussions on the implementation and operation of the SPS Agreement with respect to transparency, technical assistance, special and differential treatment, international harmonization, equivalence, adaptation to regional conditions, risk assessment, and dispute resolution.

3. As part of the review, the Committee considered ways to improve the operation of the transparency provisions of the Agreement, in particular those related to notifications and the operation of Enquiry Points. The Committee adopted revised Recommended Notification Procedures, annexed to the Report on the Review of the Agreement.

4. At its regular meetings, the SPS Committee considered a number of specific trade concerns, including several related to individual notifications. The issues discussed included, *inter alia*, measures related to dioxin; measures related to maximum levels of aflatoxins in food; measures related to antibiotics in feed; and measures affecting raw milk cheeses, other dairy products, beef, poultry products, bovine semen, horses, gelatine, potatoes and milled rice.

5. Members informed the SPS Committee about the recognition of disease-free areas, equivalence agreements and the use of international standards. The Secretariat circulated updated

<sup>1</sup> The report of the March meeting is contained in G/SPS/R/14, and that of the July meeting will be circulated as G/SPS/R/15.

<sup>2</sup> G/SPS/12.

lists of National Enquiry Points and National Notification Authorities.<sup>3</sup> The SPS Committee continued its discussion on the SPS Agreement and developing countries, based on a paper prepared by the Secretariat, as well as contributions from Egypt.<sup>4</sup>

6. On the basis of the provisional procedure to monitor the use of international standards, adopted in October 1997<sup>5</sup>, the Committee discussed examples of what Members considered to be problems with significant trade impact which they believed to be related to the use or non-use of relevant international standards, guidelines or recommendations. At its July meeting, the Committee adopted the annual monitoring report.<sup>6</sup> The Committee referred the report to the relevant international standard-setting bodies for their consideration. The Committee decided to continue the provisional procedure to monitor the use of international standards for a further 24 months.<sup>7</sup>

7. The SPS Committee held further informal consultations in connection with each of the Committee's formal meetings on the structure and substance of the guidelines to further the practical implementation of Article 5.5. Considerable progress on the draft guidelines was made.

8. At each meeting of the SPS Committee, Members, the Secretariat and the observer inter-governmental organizations reported on their technical assistance activities. Members were provided the opportunity to identify specific needs for technical assistance.

9. The SPS Committee continued informal consultations on requests for observer status from a number of international intergovernmental organizations.<sup>8</sup> At the March meeting, the SPS Committee agreed on a procedure for granting ad hoc observer status to qualified organizations while consultations on permanent observer status continued. For considering requests for ad hoc observer status, the Committee decided to apply the criteria specified in G/SPS/W/98 paragraph 7, i.e. mandate, scope and area of work; contribution to the functioning and implementation of the SPS Agreement; and reciprocity. The Secretariat circulated a summary of the information provided by the various organizations seeking observer status.<sup>9</sup> At the July meeting, the Committee welcomed the participation of regional plant protection organizations as part of the IPPC delegation.

10. The SPS Committee continued to maintain close working relationships with the IPPC, the OIE and Codex. On behalf of the North American Plant Protection Organization, the IPPC submitted a list of experts in pest risk analysis.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> G/SPS/ENQ/8, G/SPS/GEN/125, and G/SPS/GEN/27/Rev.5.

<sup>4</sup> G/SPS//W/93 and G/SPS/GEN/128, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> G/SPS/11.

<sup>6</sup> G/SPS/13.

<sup>7</sup> G/SPS/14.

<sup>8</sup> The Committee is currently considering applications from: the Office international de la vigne et du vin (OIV), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the Latin American Economic System (SELA), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Regional International Agricultural Health Organization (OIRSA), the ACP Group and the OECD. The EPPO withdrew its request for observer status following arrangements to participate as part of the IPPC delegation.

<sup>9</sup> G/SPS/GEN/121.

<sup>10</sup> G/SPS/GEN/118.