



23 October 2015

(15-5609)

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## REPORT (2015) ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

### REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON

1.1. The present report is being circulated by the Chairperson of the Committee on Agriculture on his own responsibility. This report provides a summary of the activities of the Committee on Agriculture ("the Committee") during 2015.

1.2. The Committee held three meetings in 2015 on 4 March, 4 June and 25 September.<sup>1</sup> Mrs Miriam Chaves of Argentina was the chairperson for the March meeting of the Committee. The Committee elected Mr Michael Wamai (Uganda) as the new chairperson for 2015-2016 at the June meeting.

1.3. In accordance with Article 18.1 of the Agreement on Agriculture ("the Agreement") at each of its meetings the Committee reviewed progress in the implementation of Members' commitments. This review process is undertaken on the basis of notifications submitted by Members in the areas of market access, domestic support, export competition, export prohibitions and restrictions as well as under the follow-up to the Marrakesh Ministerial Decision on NFIDCs. Between 1 January and 13 October 2015, 136 agriculture notifications of all types were circulated.

1.4. In total 58 notifications were subject to review in 2015. Overall in the Committee meetings that took place in March, June and September 2015 Members posed 201 questions in connection with specific notifications. These questions were distributed as follows: 72% related to domestic support issues, 16% to market access, and 12% to export subsidies.<sup>2</sup> Specific concerns were also raised regarding the outstanding notifications that some Members had yet to submit to the Committee.<sup>3</sup>

1.5. A wide range of matters relevant to the implementation of commitments was also raised independently of notifications under the provisions of Article 18.6 of the Agreement. A total of 34 implementation-related issues were raised by ten Members during 2015.<sup>4</sup> Out of these, 19 issues were discussed for the first time in 2015. These included questions on Angola's Joint Executive Decree on import regulation, Argentina's domestic support notifications, Egypt's domestic support notifications, European Union's dairy policies, India's cotton policies, India's export assistance programmes, India's export of cereals and rice, India's importation of apples, India's minimum indicative export quotas for sugar, India's support price for wheat, Indonesia's regulation on importation of meat, Indonesia's restrictions on importation of sugar, Korea's rice imports, Pakistan's wheat export subsidies, Russia's wheat export tax, Russia's grain exports, Switzerland's export subsidy budget, Thailand's sugar policies, and the U.S. Export Credit Guarantee Program. The remaining issues were discussed one or more times in previous years either under the review of notifications or under matters raised under Article 18.6. In 2015 a large number of the new issues related to area of export competition, such as the request for confirmation and clarification on the use of export subsidies and other export measures with equivalent effect.

<sup>1</sup> The summary reports of these meetings are contained in documents G/AG/R/77, G/AG/R/78, and G/AG/R/79 (to be issued).

<sup>2</sup> See G/AG/W/142, section 2.1-2.5; G/AG/W/145, section 2.1-2.5; and G/AG/W/146, section 2.1-2.4.

<sup>3</sup> See for example G/AG/R/76, paras. 1.10-1.12.

<sup>4</sup> See G/AG/W/142, G/AG/W/145 and G/AG/W/146.

1.6. At each meeting the Committee reviewed the current status of Members' compliance with their notification obligations under the Agreement. A document summarizing the current status of compliance with notification requirements was circulated at each Committee meeting.<sup>5</sup> While a significant proportion of notifications are still outstanding (about 27%), Members have increased their efforts to bring their notification record up to date by submitting notifications covering multiple reporting periods. Since 2009 onwards, the average number of years reported per notification has been close to three.

1.7. In March 2015, the Committee continued its discussions in an informal setting on the issue of implementation of notifications in the area of export restrictions based on a written submission from Japan.<sup>6</sup> The discussions were primarily limited to the issue of the definition of 'foodstuffs'.<sup>7</sup>

1.8. With respect to the work of the Committee related specifically to NFIDCs, the WTO list of NFIDCs<sup>8</sup> remained unchanged as no new applications had been received since 2012. The Follow-up to the Ministerial Decision on Measures Concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least developed and Net Food-Importing Developing Countries (NFIDC) which is normally monitored in the Committee's November meeting will take place in the first meeting of the Committee in 2016. As is normal practice, the monitoring exercise will be undertaken on the basis of, *inter alia*, Table NF:1 notifications by donor Members, contributions by Members and observer organizations, as well as a background note prepared by the Secretariat.<sup>9</sup> The consultations under Article 18.5 of the Agreement that are conducted annually in the November meetings of the Committee will also be held in the first meeting of the Committee in 2016. Like in previous years, a secretariat background note<sup>10</sup> will be circulated prior to the Committee meeting in order to facilitate the consultations.

1.9. The Committee maintained a standing item on its agenda relating to implementation issues, both in the framework of its follow-up to the Decision by the Doha Ministerial Conference on Implementation-Related Issues and Concerns<sup>11</sup>, as well as in the framework of issues and proposals referred to it by the General Council.

1.10. The Committee also discussed in formal settings follow-up to the Bali Ministerial decisions related to (i) the Understanding on Tariff Rate Quota Administration Provisions of Agricultural Products, as defined in Article 2 of the Agreement on Agriculture; and (ii) the Bali Ministerial Declaration on Export Competition. With respect to the Understanding on TRQ administration, following Committee discussions in 2014 regarding the best practice for notifying TRQ fill rates, many Members who had submitted Table MA:2 notifications began providing data on in-quota imports using the proposed format.<sup>12</sup>

1.11. With respect to the follow-up on the Declaration on Export Competition, the second annual dedicated discussion on export competition occurred during the June 2015 meeting. The discussions were held on the basis of the Secretariat's background document based on the answers to the questionnaire sent to Members on 26 November 2014, and relevant information coming from Table ES:1 and ES:3 notifications and notifications to the Working Party on State Trading Enterprises. Following the meeting, a revised Secretariat's background document compiling all the information received by the Secretariat was circulated on 27 July 2015<sup>13</sup> concluding the second annual examination process.

1.12. The WTO's Agriculture and Commodities Division delivered the seventh Geneva-based workshop on agriculture notifications on 6-9 July 2015. It was organised in collaboration with the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation with the purpose of facilitating the preparation and review of agriculture notifications. A total of 20 participants from developing country capitals were funded by the WTO, and 5 participants came on a self-funded basis. The workshop included practical exercises related to the review process of the Committee on Agriculture. It also provided

<sup>5</sup> G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.20-22.

<sup>6</sup> G/AG/W/140.

<sup>7</sup> G/AG/R/77, paras. 2.10-2.12.

<sup>8</sup> G/AG/5/Rev.10.

<sup>9</sup> In the G/AG/W/42/series.

<sup>10</sup> In the G/AG/W/32/series.

<sup>11</sup> WT/MIN(01)/17, para. 2.

<sup>12</sup> See G/AG/W/137.

<sup>13</sup> G/AG/W/125/Rev.3, addenda and corrigenda.

hands-on training on the Agriculture Information Management System (AG-IMS) to empower participants to make full use of existing information tools. As in previous editions, the last day of the 2015 workshop was entirely devoted to individual sessions with AGCD staff, with a view to offer the participants the opportunity to consult on unfulfilled notification obligations. In addition to the workshop, the Secretariat conducted in 2015 two national seminars on agriculture notifications in Colombia, and Saint Lucia.

1.13. The following international intergovernmental organizations have regular observer status in the Committee: Food and Agriculture Organization, International Monetary Fund, the International Grains Council, OECD, UNCTAD, World Food Programme, and the World Bank. The Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Cooperation (IICA) continued to benefit from ad hoc observer status. No consensus has been reached as regards requests for observer status by eleven other international organizations.

1.14. The Committee agreed to hold regular meetings on 9-10 March, 7-8 June, 14-15 September and 9-10 November in 2016.

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