

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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REPORT (2009) ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE (REGULAR SESSION)

Report by the Chairperson

The present report on the regular meetings of the Committee on Agriculture held in 2009 is submitted on the responsibility of the Chairperson, Ms. Valeria Csukasi of Uruguay, as agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 24 September 2009.

1. The Committee on Agriculture held three regular meetings on 12 March, 2 July and 24 September 2009.¹ A further regular meeting is scheduled for 19 November 2009.

2. 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 was undertaken on the basis of notifications submitted by Members in the areas of market access, domestic support and export competition. In total, 169 notifications were subject to review. At each of its meetings, the Committee also reviewed the overall position with respect to Members' compliance with their notification obligations under Article 18.2 and other relevant provisions of the Agreement. Specific concerns were raised regarding the outstanding notifications that a number of Members have yet to submit to the Committee.² As requested by the Committee at its September meeting, a document showing the current status of compliance with notification requirements was circulated as G/AG/GEN/86.

3. In light of the significant number of overdue notifications, and spurred by the request by the Chairman of the General Council to the Chairpersons of all WTO Councils and Committees to consult on ways to improve the timeliness and completeness of notifications and other information flows on trade measures, the Committee on Agriculture intensified its notification-related work, in both formal and informal mode.

4. As a first step, a questionnaire-based survey was conducted to better understand the difficulties Members faced in preparing, submitting and analyzing notifications and to identify possible solutions to address them.³ Following the release of the survey results⁴, the Committee considered a Work Programme elaborated by the Secretariat with a view to setting out possible elements for action/discussion on practical solutions to the problems identified.

¹ The summary reports of these meetings are contained in documents G/AG/R/54, 55 and 56 (to be issued).

² See, for example, paragraphs 50-70 of G/AG/R/54.

³ G/AG/GEN/83 refers.

⁴ G/AG/GEN/85 refers.

5. As part of this Work Programme, the Committee focused on priority items, such as:

- (a) technical assistance and training activities with a view to enhancing institutional capacity to prepare and analyze notifications. In this context, the Agriculture and Commodities Division organized a Workshop on Agriculture Notifications. This event was held in Geneva, from 22 to 24 September 2009, back-to-back with the 56th regular session of the Committee on Agriculture with a view to enabling Members to fulfill their notification obligations. The sessions, some of which were attended by over 200 capital- and Geneva-based participants, focussed on agriculture notification requirements and formats and the availability of existing tools. Members were given an opportunity to share their own experiences in preparing and analyzing notifications as well as in participating in the Review Process; and
- (b) improved access to Committee-related documentation, notably through the electronic dissemination of notifications, circulation of some of the room documents as official and unrestricted WTO documents, and the redesigning of the public and Members' web sites.

6. The Committee also addressed a wide range of general and specific matters relevant to the implementation of commitments that were raised independently of notifications under the provisions of Article 18.6 of the Agreement.

7. Pursuant to Article 18.5 of the Agreement, the Committee will hold its annual consultation on Members' participation in the normal growth of world trade in agricultural products within the framework of the export subsidy disciplines during the forthcoming November 2009 meeting.

8. The follow-up to the Decision on Measures Concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least-Developed and Net Food-Importing Developing Countries (NFIDCs) will be monitored by the Committee at its forthcoming November meeting. As is customary, that monitoring exercise will be undertaken on the basis of, *inter alia*, Table NF:1 notifications by donor Members, contributions by the observer organizations, as well as a background note to be prepared by the Secretariat. The WTO list of NFIDCs⁵ remained unchanged as no new application has been received since 2005. In this regard, the delegation of Swaziland indicated that it was in the process of collating the statistical data necessary to be considered for inclusion in the WTO list of NFIDCs and that it intended to submit these data for Members' consideration in 2010.⁶

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 Concerns⁷, as well as in the framework of issues and proposals referred to it by the General Council.⁸ Further to formal and informal consultations, a *Compendium of Documents on Implementation-Related Issues* was circulated on 16 March 2009. The Compendium consolidates information with respect to the work in the area of implementation and will be updated as may be required.⁹

⁵ G/AG/5/Rev.8 refers.

⁶ Paragraph 3 of G/AG/3 refers.

⁷ Paragraph 2 of WT/MIN(01)/17 refers.

⁸ G/AG/16, G/AG/16/Add.1 and G/AG/22 refer.

⁹ G/AG/W/70, Add.1 and Add.2 refer.

10. On 24 September 2009, the Committee held its eighth Transitional Review under paragraph 18 of the Protocol on the Accession of the People's Republic of China¹⁰, as well as the multilateral review of the implementation of Korea's minimum market access commitments for rice under paragraph 2 of Schedule LX – Republic of Korea.¹¹

11. The following international intergovernmental organizations have regular observer status in the Committee: the FAO, the IMF, the International Grains Council, the OECD, UNCTAD, the World Food Programme and the World Bank. At present, no consensus has been reached as regards requests for observer status by twelve other international intergovernmental organizations.¹²

12. The Committee adopted the following schedule for the Committee's regular meetings in 2010: 11-12 March, 10-11 June, 16-17 September and 18-19 November.

¹⁰ G/AG/26 refers.

¹¹ The results of the negotiations held by Korea with interested Members pursuant to paragraph 8 of Annex 5 of the Agreement on Agriculture were notified in G/MA/TAR/RS/98 and subsequently certified by the Director General (see WT/Let/492 and WT/Let/504). See also the report by Korea to the Committee on Agriculture in document G/AG/W/71.

¹² G/AG/W/29/Rev.6 refers.