

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

G/L/197

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REPORT (1997) OF THE COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

1. 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 1997.

2. The Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the "SPS Committee") held three regular meetings in 1997: on 19-20 March, 1-2 July and 15-16 October. At the March meeting, Dr. Alex Thiermann (United States) was appointed Chairman for 1997/98. The reports of the meetings are contained in documents G/SPS/R/7, G/SPS/R/8 and G/SPS/R/9.

3. In March 1997, the Rules of Procedure were adopted by the SPS Committee and were subsequently approved by the Council for Trade in Goods (G/L/170). The SPS Committee agreed that *regular* observer status be granted to the Joint FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex), the FAO International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the Office international des épizooties (OIE), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The observer status conferred upon the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) by the General Council in November 1996 was noted. Following the March meeting, the Chairman has continued to hold informal consultations with interested Members regarding further requests for observer status.

4. In reviewing the implementation of the SPS Agreement during 1997, the SPS Committee considered information provided by Members regarding: changes introduced in national sanitary or phytosanitary regulatory frameworks and on the disease status of several countries, notably with respect to foot-and-mouth disease, transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) and fruit fly. At each of the meetings, Members raised specific trade concerns, including several related to individual notifications. Such concerns included, *inter alia*, measures related to the shelf life of UHT milk; measures on grains, oilseeds, rice, fruits, vegetables and poultry; requirements for wines; plant quarantine regulations; and measures related to citrus canker. In addition, many Members raised specific trade concerns related to measures imposed in response to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). In light of the interest regarding this latter issue, informal consultations were held.

5. Updated lists of National Enquiry Points (G/SPS/ENQ/6) and National Notification Authorities (G/SPS/GEN/35) were circulated, with addenda. Noting that some Members had yet to notify the Secretariat of these entities, the SPS Committee urged Members to comply with their obligations as soon as possible.

6. The SPS Committee continued to consider the structure and substance of guidelines to further the practical implementation of Article 5:5. The SPS Committee agreed to pursue this matter through informal consultations with a view to furthering the development of these guidelines.

7. On the basis of Members' proposals, the SPS Committee adopted a provisional procedure to monitor the use of international standards (G/SPS/11).

8. At its October meeting, the Committee agreed on a procedure for conducting its review of the implementation and operation of the Agreement in accordance with Article 12.7 (G/SPS/10).

9. At each meeting of the SPS Committee, Members, the Secretariat and the observer intergovernmental organizations reported on their technical assistance activities. Members were provided the opportunity to identify specific needs for technical assistance. In order to address the growing demand for technical assistance and to avoid duplication, the need for close cooperation among those providing assistance was stressed. It was also noted that particular emphasis should be put on assisting with the implementation of the transparency provisions of the Agreement.

10. The SPS Committee maintained close contact with the relevant standard-setting organizations, and was kept informed about the revision of the IPPC, as well as the adoption of international standards by the Codex at its session in June 1997. An updated list of international standards developed by Codex, IPPC and OIE was submitted to the SPS Committee. The Codex formally requested the SPS Committee to provide some clarification regarding the applicability of regional Codex standards as well as the status of Codex guidelines and codes of practice in relation to the SPS Agreement. The SPS Committee adopted a Draft Agreement between the WTO and the OIE (G/SPS/W/61) which was approved by the Council for Trade in Goods and, subsequently, by the General Council at its meeting of 22 October.

11. The following tentative schedule of meetings in 1998 was agreed by the SPS Committee:
12-13 March, 10-11 June, 15-16 September and 11-12 November.