

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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## REPORT (2002) ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

The present report is being circulated by the Chairperson of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures on her own responsibility. This report provides a summary of the activities and decisions of the Committee through 8 November 2002.

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1. The Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the "SPS Committee") held three regular meetings in 2002: on 19-21 March, 25-26 June and 7-8 November.<sup>1</sup> At the March meeting, Mrs. Maria Fe Alberto-Chau Huu (Philippines) was appointed Chairperson for the period 2002/2003.

2. In line with the directive from the Fourth Session of the Ministerial Conference<sup>2</sup>, at its meeting in March the Committee adopted a Programme for Further Work regarding the implementation of Article 4 of the Agreement (equivalence).<sup>3</sup> Informal meetings on equivalence were held prior to each of the Committee's regular meetings. As agreed in the Programme for Further Work, information was provided by Members and by the observer organizations regarding their experiences with respect to equivalence. In addition, at its November meeting the Committee agreed on clarifications of paragraphs 5 and 6 of the Decision on the Implementation of Article 4 of the Agreement.<sup>4</sup>

3. Also at its meeting in March, the Committee adopted revised Recommended Procedures for Implementing the Transparency Obligations of the SPS Agreement (Article 7). These recommended procedures address all aspects of the transparency obligations, including notifications, publication and the operation of enquiry points. An addendum to the Recommended Procedures was adopted at the June meeting of the Committee, and provides a format and instructions for notification of Determination of the Recognition of Equivalence of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.<sup>5</sup>

4. At its regular meetings, the SPS Committee considered a wide range of specific trade concerns, including many related to individual notifications. The issues discussed included, *inter alia*, measures taken in response to foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks, maximum levels for certain food contaminants (notably aflatoxins), and measures taken by Members affecting trade in beef, pork, poultry, fishmeal, fresh fruit, gelatine and genetically modified products. The Secretariat revised its document summarizing all specific trade concerns raised in the Committee.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The report of the March meeting is contained in G/SPS/R/26 and corrigendum, that of the June meeting in G/SPS/R/27 and corrigendum, and the report of the November meeting will be circulated as G/SPS/R/28.

<sup>2</sup> WT/MIN(01)/17, paragraph 3.3.

<sup>3</sup> G/SPS/20.

<sup>4</sup> The Decision is contained in G/SPS/19, the agreed clarifications in G/SPS/19/Add.1.

<sup>5</sup> G/SPS/7/Rev.2 and G/SPS/7/Rev.2/Add.1.

<sup>6</sup> G/SPS/GEN/204/Rev.2.

5. Members informed the SPS Committee about the recognition of disease-free areas and about their use of international standards. The Secretariat circulated updated lists of National Enquiry Points and National Notification Authorities.<sup>7</sup> Over 581 notifications were submitted in accordance with the SPS Agreement in the period 1 January through 31 October 2002, bringing the total number of SPS notifications submitted since the entry into force of the Agreement to 3211.

6. The SPS Committee continued its examination of the SPS Agreement and the concerns of developing countries. In particular, Egypt suggested inclusion of information on special and differential treatment in the notifications of SPS measures. Other ways to effectively address these concerns were discussed by the Committee at each of its meetings in 2002, and Canada submitted a proposal in this regard at the November meeting.<sup>8</sup>

7. Members, the Secretariat and the observer organizations provided information regarding their technical assistance activities at each meeting of the Committee. By the November meeting of the Committee, 27 Members had submitted responses to the questionnaire regarding their technical assistance needs.<sup>9</sup> An informal meeting on technical assistance preceded the March Committee meeting, and a seminar on SPS-related capacity-building was organized by the Secretariat immediately preceding the November meeting of the Committee.

8. The SPS Committee continued to monitor the use of international standards, following the provisional procedure adopted in October 1997.<sup>10</sup> The Fourth Annual Report on the Procedure to Monitor the Process of International Harmonization was adopted by the Committee in June.<sup>11</sup>

9. The SPS Committee continued to grant ad hoc observer status on a meeting-by-meeting basis to 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. A request for observer status was received from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Consideration continued of requests for observer status from the International Organization of Vine and Wine (OIV) and the Asian Pacific Coconut Community (APCC).

10. At its November meeting, the Committee conducted a transitional review under Paragraph 18 of the Protocol of Accession of the People's Republic of China.<sup>12</sup> Several Members submitted questions in writing regarding implementation by China, and China responded to these questions and to others raised in the course of the meeting.

11. The SPS Committee maintained its close working relationships with the IPPC, the OIE and Codex. The Committee received regular updates on activities from the IPPC, OIE and Codex.<sup>13</sup> Other observer organizations also provided information on their activities, including technical assistance activities, particularly IICA, OIRSA and the ITC.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> G/SPS/GEN/ENQ/14 and G/SPS/NNA/4, respectively.

<sup>8</sup> G/SPS/W/127.

<sup>9</sup> The questionnaire is contained in G/SPS/W/113, and the responses to the questionnaire have been circulated as addendum to G/SPS/GEN/295.

<sup>10</sup> G/SPS/11.

<sup>11</sup> G/SPS/21.

<sup>12</sup> The report by the Chairperson to the Council for Trade in Goods is contained in G/SPS/22.

<sup>13</sup> G/SPS/GEN/305/Rev.1, G/SPS/GEN/306/Rev.1, G/SPS/GEN/327, G/SPS/GEN/328; and G/SPS/GEN/308.

<sup>14</sup> G/SPS/GEN/310, G/SPS/GEN/333 and G/SPS/GEN/350; G/SPS/GEN/307; and G/SPS/GEN/335.