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Committee on Agriculture

**REPORT (2013) ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**

REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON

1. The present report on the regular meetings of the Committee on Agriculture held in 2013 is submitted on the responsibility of the Chairperson, Mr Guilherme Marquardt Bayer of Brazil, as agreed by the Committee at its seventy-first session.
2. The Committee held three meetings in 2013 on 26 March, 13 June and 26 September.¹ The last Committee meeting in 2013, normally held in November, was postponed to 28 January 2014. In addition, three informal meetings were held in 2013.
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. In total 137 notifications were subject to review in 2013. Specific concerns were also raised regarding the outstanding notifications that some Members had yet to submit to the Committee.²
4. Overall in the Committee meetings that took place in 2013 Members posed 175 questions in connection with specific notifications. These questions were distributed as follows: 77% related to domestic support issues, 20% to market access and 3% to export subsidies.³
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 17 implementation-related issues were raised by five Members during 2013.⁴ Out of these, four issues were discussed for the first time in 2013, whereas 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. Topics in relation to domestic support were among the most discussed in this section (e.g., Members adherence to its domestic support commitment levels and additional information on domestic support measures).

¹ The summary reports of these meetings are contained in documents G/AG/R/70, G/AG/R/71, and G/AG/R/72 [to be issued].

² See for example G/AG/R/71, paras. 1.10-1.12.

³ See G/AG/W/109 sections 2.1-2.6; G/AG/W/111, sections 2.1-2.3; and G/AG/W/114, sections 2.1-2.5.

⁴ The issues raised included Indonesia's stockholding programmes; Turkey's destination of wheat flour sale; Thailand's paddy pledging scheme; Saint-Lucia's domestic purchase requirements for poultry and pork; Costa Rica's compliance with AMS commitments; China's cotton domestic support; Brazil's domestic support programmes; United States of America's refined sugar re-export program; Ukraine's state regulation of production and realization of Sugar; Republic of Korea's domestic support for pork and beef; India's national food security bill; Brazil's trade and industry policy; Canada's dairy policies; Philippines' continuous use of reference prices applied to imports; Indonesia's quantitative and other import restrictions on certain food products; Sri Lanka's milk powder tariff and compliance with WTO bindings; and Switzerland's Compliance with Article 9.1(c) (see G/AG/W/109 section 1.1-1.8; G/AG/W/111, section 1.1-1.9; and G/AG/W/114, section 1.1-1.14).

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.⁵ While a significant proportion of notifications are still outstanding (about 33%), Members have increased their efforts to bring their notification record up-to-date by submitting notifications covering multiple reporting periods.

7. The Committee continued to work on updating the list of Significant Exporters for the purposes of Table ES:2 notification. Most discussions occurred in informal meetings with the Chair reporting back on the discussions in formal meetings.⁶

8. 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) was monitored in the Committee's September meeting. The monitoring exercise was undertaken on the basis of, *inter alia*, Table NF:1 notifications by donor Members, contributions by Members and observer organizations⁷, as well as a background note prepared by the Secretariat.⁸ The WTO list of NFIDCs⁹ remained unchanged as no new application had been received since 2012.

9. In September the Committee also conducted its annual consultations under Article 18.5 to review the normal growth of world agricultural trade in the context of export subsidy commitments. A background note by the Secretariat¹⁰ showed the evolution of world agricultural trade in respect of a number of products or product categories which have been considered potentially more prone to the provision of export subsidies.

10. 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 Concerns¹¹, as well as in the framework of issues and proposals referred to it by the General Council.

11. In the Committee Members also exchanged views on approaches to strengthen the functioning of the Committee particularly its work relating to transparency. This issue was discussed in informal meetings in March, June and September.¹² Members also continued discussions on how to improve submission of notifications. At the request of Members, the Secretariat produced a documentation guide summarizing the Committee's work on this issue.¹³

12. To facilitate the preparation and review of agriculture notifications, the WTO's Agriculture and Commodities Division in collaboration with the Institute for Training and Technical Co-operation delivered the fifth workshop in Geneva on agriculture notifications on 2-5 July 2013. A total of 20 participants from developing country capitals were funded by the WTO and number of participants came on a self-funded basis. The workshop included practical exercises related to the review process of the Committee on Agriculture and provided hands-on training on the use of the Agriculture Information Management System (AG IMS) (see below). Participants also had the opportunity to meet individually with Secretariat staff to consult on unfulfilled notification obligations. In addition, in 2013 the Secretariat conducted three national seminars on agriculture notifications in Cape Verde, China and Guatemala.

⁵ G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.13, G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.14 and G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.15.

⁶ See G/AG/R/71, paras. 2.3-2.5.

⁷ G/AG/GEN/114, G/AG/GEN/114/Corr.1 and G/AG/GEN/111.

⁸ G/AG/W/42/Rev.16.

⁹ G/AG/5/Rev.10.

¹⁰ G/AG/W/32/Rev.14 and G/AG/W/32/Rev.14/Corr.1

¹¹ Paragraph 2 of WT/MIN(01)/17.

¹² See, for example, G/AG/W/107 and G/AG/W/113.

¹³ G/AG/W/112 and G/AG/W/112/Corr.1.

13. Members' access to the AG IMS was further enhanced during 2013. The system can now be accessed through the WTO's public website. The AG IMS enables Members to search questions and answers discussed in the Committee since 1995. The system also allows users to search and analyse up-to-date agriculture-related notified information in market access, domestic support and export subsidies. Members have begun submitting and responding to questions on-line through this system. This system will also provide the platform for future on-line submission of notifications.

14. 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 Co-operation (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.

15. The Committee agreed to hold regular meetings on 28 January, 14 March, 6 June and 13 November in 2014.
