

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

G/L/929

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REPORT (2010) 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 2010 is submitted on the responsibility of the Chairperson, Ms. Valeria Csukasi of Uruguay, as agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 23 September 2010.

1. The Committee on Agriculture held two regular meetings on 10 March and 23 September.¹ A further regular meeting is scheduled for 18 November 2010.

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, 176 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 A document showing the current status of compliance with notification requirements continues to be circulated in the G/AG/GEN/86 series.

3. Under the Review Process, 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.

4. As part of its work to improve the timeliness and completeness of notifications and other information flows on trade measures, the Committee on Agriculture continued focussing on priority items:

- (a) further to the Committee's decision in November 2009, the compilations of questions posed by Members under the Review Process as well as written responses thereto were circulated as official WTO documents. These were initially circulated as restricted documents, in line with the distribution procedures laid out in the 2002 General Council Decision. Such documents are automatically derestricted 60 days after the date of circulation, unless requested otherwise by a Member. In the latter

¹ The summary reports of these meetings are contained in documents G/AG/R/58 and 59 (to be issued).

² See, for example, paragraphs 49-55 of G/AG/W/74/Rev.1 and paragraphs 57-63 of G/AG/W/75/Rev.4.

- case, the document would remain restricted for one additional period of 30 days after which it would be derestricted;³
- (b) in response to Members' requests, the Secretariat made publicly available on the WTO web site the datasets on information notified by way of Table MA:2, MA:5, DS:1 and ES:1 notifications;
 - (c) in the context of technical assistance and training activities, and as provided for in the WTO's *Biennial Technical Assistance and Training Plan 2010-2011*, the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC) in conjunction with the Agriculture and Commodities Division organized an English-speaking Workshop on Agriculture Notifications in Geneva on the margins of the 59th regular session of the Committee, offering specialized training to 32 capital-based government officials with direct responsibility in the preparation of agriculture notifications. A Spanish-speaking session will be held on the margins of the 60th regular session in November 2010.⁴ In response to Members' demands, a new Handbook on Notification Requirements under the Agreement on Agriculture as well as a self-training module on agriculture notifications were developed and made available on the public web site⁵; and
 - (d) an annotated document reflecting further consultations on Members' suggestions of "best practices" was circulated as G/AG/W/73/Rev.2 and was further updated to take into account recent discussions.

5. In response to Members' request at the November 2009 meeting, the Secretariat prepared a background note⁶ containing relevant statistical data in order to facilitate the informal consultations on the list of "significant exporters"⁷ to be held in October 2010. This background note will also be reviewed during the November 2010 meeting as part of the annual consultations on Members' participation in the normal growth of world trade in agricultural products within the framework of the export subsidy disciplines, pursuant to Article 18.5 of the Agreement.

6. 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 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 prepared by the Secretariat.

7. In accordance with the Committee's Decision⁸, the WTO list of NFIDCs⁹ was reviewed at the March 2010 meeting of the Committee. The Committee acknowledged receipt of a new request from Grenada as well as the pending request from Swaziland for inclusion in the list. The Chairperson indicated that both requests would remain pending until the requisite data was provided.

³ Paragraph 2(b) of WT/L/452 refers.

⁴ A French-speaking session will be scheduled early in 2011.

⁵ See the section entitled 'Resources' on the Members' Transparency Toolkit on the public web site and at the following address: http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/agric_e/transparency_toolkit_e.htm

⁶ G/AG/W/76 refers.

⁷ G/AG/2/Add.1 refers.

⁸ G/AG/3 dated 24 November 1995 refers.

⁹ G/AG/5/Rev.8 refers.

8. 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 Concerns¹⁰, as well as in the framework of issues and proposals referred to it by the General Council.

9. The *Compendium of Documents on Implementation-Related Issues*, consolidating information with respect to the work in the following areas of implementation, was updated¹¹:

- (a) Article 10.2 of the Agreement on Agriculture: the development of internationally agreed disciplines to govern the provision of export credits, export credit guarantees or insurance programmes, taking into account the provisions of paragraph 4 of the Decision on Measures Concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least-Developed and Net Food-Importing Developing Countries (Marrakesh NFIDC Decision);
- (b) Examination of Possible Means of Improving the Effectiveness the Marrakesh NFIDC Decision: food aid (paragraph 3(i) and (ii) of the Decision, technical and financial assistance in the context of aid programmes to improve agricultural productivity and infrastructure (paragraph 3(iii) of the Decision), and financing of normal levels of commercial imports of basic foodstuffs (paragraphs 4 and 5 of the Decision); and
- (c) Members' Addenda to their notifications submitted to the Committee on Agriculture (Table MA:1) in accordance with paragraph 1.1 of the Decision of the General Council in WT/L/384 regarding the administration of tariff rate quota regimes in a transparent, equitable and non-discriminatory manner.

10. 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. A request by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) for *ad hoc* observer status was considered by the Committee at its March 2010 meeting and in light of discussions it was decided to grant *ad hoc* observer status to IICA who would therefore be invited on a meeting-by-meeting basis. At present, no consensus has been reached as regards requests for observer status by eleven other international intergovernmental organizations.¹²

11. The Committee adopted the following schedule for its regular meetings in 2011: 31 March, 23 June, 29 September and 17 November.

¹⁰ Paragraph 2 of WT/MIN(01)/17 refers.

¹¹ G/AG/W/70/Rev.1/Add.1 and Add.2 refer.

¹² G/AG/W/29/Rev.7, dated 23 March 2010, refers.