



**REPORT (2017) ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**

**REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON**

1.1. The present draft report is being circulated by the Chairperson of the Committee on Agriculture on his own responsibility. This report provides a summary of the activities of the Committee on Agriculture ("the Committee") during 2017.

1.2. The Committee held three formal meetings in 2017 on 27-28 March, 7-8 June, and 17-18 October.<sup>1</sup> An informal meeting was held on 17 October. Garth Ehrhardt was the Chairperson for the March meeting of the Committee. The Committee elected Mr Alf Vederhus of Norway as the new Chairperson for 2017-2018 beginning with the June meeting.

1.3. 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. Between 1 January and 31 October 2017, 182 agriculture notifications of all types were circulated.

1.4. In 2017, Members posed 200 questions on 67 notifications during the Committee's review process. These questions were distributed as follows: 86% related to domestic support issues, 9% to market access, and 5% to export competition.<sup>2</sup> Specific concerns were also raised regarding the outstanding notifications that some Members had yet to submit to the Committee.<sup>3</sup>

1.5. 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 54 implementation-related issues were raised by 14 Members during 2017.<sup>4</sup> Out of these, 40 issues were discussed for the first time in 2017. 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. In 2017 a large number of the new issues related to the areas of domestic support and market access.

1.6. 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.<sup>5</sup> While a significant proportion of notifications are still outstanding (about 26% of all notifications from 1995 - 2015), Members have increased their efforts to bring their notification record up to date by submitting notifications covering multiple reporting periods. Since 2009, the average number of years reported per notification has been close to three.

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<sup>1</sup> The summary reports of these meetings are contained in documents G/AG/R/84, G/AG/R/85, and G/AG/R/86 (to be issued).

<sup>2</sup> See G/AG/W/161, section 2; G/AG/W/165, section 2; and G/AG/W/168, section 2.

<sup>3</sup> 7% of the total questions related to outdated notifications.

<sup>4</sup> See G/AG/W/161, section 1; G/AG/W/165 section 1; and G/AG/W/168, section 1.

<sup>5</sup> G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.27, G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.28 and G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.29.

1.7. With respect to the work of the Committee related specifically to NFIDCs, the WTO list of NFIDCs<sup>6</sup> remained unchanged. 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) which normally would take place in November will take place in the February 2018 meeting.

1.8. 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 Concerns<sup>7</sup>, as well as in the framework of issues and proposals referred to it by the General Council.

1.9. The Committee also discussed in formal settings follow-up to the Ministerial Outcomes, specifically related to (i) the Understanding on Tariff Rate Quota Administration Provisions of Agricultural Products, as defined in Article 2 of the Agreement on Agriculture; (ii) the Bali Ministerial Decision on Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes, and (iii) the Nairobi Ministerial Decision on Export Competition. No information was provided by Members in the context of the monitoring foreseen under the Bali Decisions on Public Stockholding for Food Security purposes.

1.10. In October the Committee initiated its review of the Bali Decision on TRQ administration called for in that Decision.<sup>8</sup> According to that Decision, the objective of the review will be to promote a continuing process of improvement in the utilization of tariff rate quotas and in the context of this review the General Council shall make recommendations to the 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference. The Secretariat circulated a background document to assist Members in their review.<sup>9</sup> A proposed timeline for the review will be discussed in first meeting of the Committee in 2018.

1.11. Members exchanged views on the implementation of the Nairobi Decision on Export Competition. The dedicated discussion on export competition occurred during the June 2017 meeting. The discussions were held on the basis of the Secretariat's background document. Following the meeting, a revised Secretariat's background document compiling all the information received by the Secretariat was circulated on 27 September 2017<sup>10</sup> concluding this examination process. During the Committee meeting Members exchanged questions and responses on specific measures in relation to the implementation of the Nairobi Decision.<sup>11</sup> The Cairns group and the Russian Federation circulated a paper as an input to the dedicated discussion.<sup>12</sup> The paper considered the alignment of Members' reported policies with the disciplines agreed by Ministers at MC10 in the Export Competition Decision.

1.12. During 2017 Members provided information regarding their efforts to advance on the modification of their scheduled export subsidy commitments pursuant to the Nairobi Decision. Australia was the first Member to submit an amended schedule to the WTO eliminating its export subsidy entitlement effective as of 22 May 2017. On October 2017, the European Union formally submitted for certification its draft Schedule CLXXV (EU-28) including a revised EU schedule on export subsidies resulting from the Nairobi Decision.

1.13. Several database tools support the Committee's monitoring and transparency functions. Since 2012 the AG-IMS platform has facilitated Member submission of questions and responses in the context of the Committee's monitoring of implementation of commitments. In 2017 the Committee discussed a proposal regarding potential AG-IMS improvements.<sup>13</sup> Members requested the Secretariat to evaluate the feasibility of making such modifications to the AG-IMS system and to report back to the Committee in the February 2018 meeting. In addition to the AG-IMS, a new on-line system for agriculture notifications has been developed and Members will be able to submit notifications through this system beginning in 2018.

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<sup>6</sup> G/AG/5/Rev.10.

<sup>7</sup> WT/MIN(01)/17, para. 2.

<sup>8</sup> WT/MIN(13)/39, para. 13.

<sup>9</sup> G/AG/W/169.

<sup>10</sup> G/AG/W/125/Rev.7, G/AG/W/125/Rev.7/Add.1, G/AG/W/125/Rev.7/Add.2, G/AG/W/125/Rev.7/Add.3, G/AG/W/125/Rev.7/Add.4.

<sup>11</sup> G/AG/W/166.

<sup>12</sup> G/AG/W/164.

<sup>13</sup> G/AG/W/167 and G/AG/W/167/corr.1

1.14. The WTO's Agriculture and Commodities Division delivered the eighth Geneva-based workshop on agriculture notifications from 13–16 March 2017. It was organized in collaboration with the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation with the purpose of facilitating the preparation and review of agriculture notifications. A total of 27 participants from developing country capitals were funded by the WTO, and one participant came on a self-funded basis. The workshop included practical exercises related to the review process of the Committee on Agriculture hands-on training on the Agriculture Information Management System (AG-IMS). As in previous activities, the last day of the 2017 workshop was devoted to individual sessions with AGCD staff, offering participants the opportunity to consult on unfulfilled notification obligations.

1.15. In addition to the notification workshop, the Secretariat conducted a workshop for LDCs from 16-19 October 2017. For the first time, this activity was delivered bilingually (interpretation English-French). A total of 29 participants were funded by the WTO. The training covered the Agreement on Agriculture, the work of the CoA and had an SPS component. As part of the workshop, participants were able to participate in the October CoA meetings. Two national seminars that included the Agreement on Agriculture and AoA negotiations were delivered in Colombia and Kazakhstan and a Regional Seminar on Agriculture for Central and Eastern European and Central Asian countries was held in Turkey.

1.16. 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. Renewal of ad hoc observer status for the Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Cooperation (IICA) was considered in the October meeting. The Committee also considered a request for ad hoc observer status<sup>14</sup> from the International Food Policy Research Institute in its October 2017 meeting but did not reach consensus. No consensus has been reached as regards pending requests for observer status by eleven other international organizations.

1.17. The Committee agreed to hold regular meetings on 21-22 February, 6-7 June, 26-27 September, and 21-22 November in 2018.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> G/AG/GEN/140/Rev.1.

<sup>15</sup> G/AG/GEN/141.