



**Council for Trade in Goods
Committee on Agriculture**

WTO RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

**REPORT TO THE COUNCIL FOR TRADE IN GOODS
BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**

The following report is being submitted by the Chairperson of the Committee on Agriculture, Mr. Marcel VERNOOIJ, at the request of the Chairperson of the Council for Trade in Goods and was prepared with the assistance of the Secretariat¹.

1 INFORMATION FOR THE CTG REPORT ON COVID-19 RELATED ACTIONS

1.1 Committee work

1.1. Since June 2020, the regular meetings of the Committee on Agriculture have consistently enabled remote participation of delegations via the Interprefy platform with a few meetings having taken place exclusively in a virtual setting due to the then prevailing sanitary situation. The Secretariat's Q&A platform under the Agriculture Information Management System² has greatly assisted the conduct of Committee's work especially during pandemic-related logistical constraints in respect of in-person participation when Members extensively relied on the AG-IMS platform to submit their responses in advance of Committee meetings allowing for deepened exchanges during meetings.

1.2 Special meeting of the Committee on Agriculture on "COVID-19 and Agriculture"

1.2. In response to specific requests by Members, a special meeting of the Committee was convened on 18 June 2020 pursuant to paragraph 6 of the Committee's working procedures (G/AG/1), focusing on COVID-19 and agricultural trade policies within the framework of the Agreement. This was the first meeting of the Committee held in a hybrid format. The discussions were organized based on specific contributions by Members on COVID-19 and agriculture as well as advance written questions on COVID-19 and agricultural trade policies within the setting of commitments under the Agreement on Agriculture.³

1.3. The importance of transparency and of the monitoring of COVID-19 agricultural measures was emphasized by Members at the special meeting. At that meeting, Members also agreed to include "COVID-19 and Agriculture" as a standing item on the agenda of future Committee meetings. It was also agreed to invite the observer international organizations to contribute to the discussions under this agenda item.

1.3 Transparency

1.4. Transparency has remained central in Members' discussions on the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering that a majority of regular agricultural notifications being 'annual' and required after the end of the relevant "year", the then Chairperson of the Committee while convening the special meeting in June 2020 encouraged Members to share "*ad hoc*" reports on their agricultural measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic towards an informed exchange of views in the Committee. Since then, eleven Members have submitted twenty-two *ad hoc* reports and updates on

¹ See document JOB/CTG/18.

² [Agriculture Information Management System \(AGIMS\)](#)

³ The summary report of this meeting is contained in documents G/AG/R/94 and G/AG/R/94/Add.1.

their COVID-19 agricultural measures. The Secretariat prepared and updated a compilation⁴ of Members' ad-hoc reports. Starting from 2021, COVID-19 agricultural measures have also formed part of Members' annual notifications and have been subject to the Committee's review process.

1.5. Based on request from Members, the Secretariat has developed a webpage on COVID-19 agricultural measures as part of the WTO's overall trade monitoring exercise.⁵ During the June 2020 special meeting of the Committee, Members had expressed interest to invite experts from other international organizations and benefit from their work on the monitoring and analysis of Covid-19 agricultural measures. The Secretariat accordingly organized an Information Session on 28 July 2020 in the margins of the July meeting of the Committee and invited the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFRPI), the International Grains Council (IGC) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) to present their Covid19-related work.⁶

1.4 Dedicated COVID-19 related activities or discussions in the Committee

1.6. As was agreed at the special meeting of the Committee in June 2020, "COVID-19 and Agriculture" has remained a standing item on the agenda of all committee meetings starting with the September 2020 meeting.⁷ The discussions have been organized based on Members' submissions, including ad hoc reports on their measures taken in the agricultural sector in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as contributions by observer international organizations.⁸ Since the September 2022 meeting of the Committee, the discussions on COVID-19 and agriculture have taken place within the overall guidance of the MC-12 Declaration on the WTO Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Preparedness for Future Pandemics specifically in light of paragraph 24 of the Declaration. The Committee also addresses COVID-19 related matters, as relevant, in the context of the implementation of the Ministerial Decision on World Food Programme Food Purchases Exemption from Export Prohibition or Restrictions⁹, and the Ministerial Declaration on the Emergency Response to Food Insecurity¹⁰.

⁴ G/AG/W/209/Rev.1.

⁵ https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/covid19_e/ag_trade_measures_e.htm .

⁶ [WTO | Information Session on Covid-19 and Agriculture, 28 July 2020.](#)

⁷ G/AG/R/94-103 refer.

⁸ Please refer to attachment 2 of WTO/AIR/AG/64 for a comprehensive list of COVID-19 written submissions considered by the Committee starting from the June 2020 special meeting.

⁹ WT/MIN(22)/29 - WT/L/1140.

¹⁰ WT/MIN(22)/28 - WT/L/1139.