

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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## REPORT (2001) ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

The present report is being circulated by the Chairman of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures on his own responsibility. This report provides a summary of the activities and decisions of the Committee through September 2001.

1. The Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the "SPS Committee") held two regular meetings in 2001: on 14-15 March and 10-11 July. A third regular meeting is scheduled for 31 October-1 November 2001.<sup>1</sup> At the March meeting, Mr. William Ehlers (Uruguay) was appointed Chairman for the period 2001/2002.

2. As part of its regular work programme, as well as in response to a request from the General Council, the Committee examined the implementation of Article 4. Informal meetings on equivalence were held prior to the March and July Committee meetings.<sup>2</sup> On 18-19 September 2001, a special Committee meeting was held on equivalence and the Committee examined a decision on how to make Article 4 more operational, in particular for developing countries. Although a decision was reached ad referendum, this was not subsequently confirmed. The proposed decision was based on contributions by Members and by the relevant international standard-setting organizations.<sup>3</sup>

3. 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, BSE, maximum levels for certain food contaminants (notably 3-MCPD and aflatoxins), and measures taken by Members affecting trade in pork, poultry, fishmeal, prawn products, bovine semen, fresh fruit, milled rice, table grapes, gelatine and bananas. The Secretariat revised its document summarizing all specific trade concerns raised in the Committee.<sup>4</sup>

4. 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>5</sup> Over 610 notifications were submitted in accordance with the SPS Agreement in the period 1 January through 30 September 2001, bringing the total number of SPS notifications submitted since the entry into force of the Agreement to 2,471.

5. The SPS Committee continued its examination of the SPS Agreement and the concerns of developing countries. In the context of the General Council's examination of implementation, the

<sup>1</sup> The report of the March meeting is contained in G/SPS/R/21, and that of the June meeting in G/SPS/R/22. The report of the October meeting will be circulated as G/SPS/R/23.

<sup>2</sup> Reported in G/L/423, G/L/445 and G/L/455.

<sup>3</sup> Document G/SPS/W/111 contains a summary of many of the submissions, see also G/SPS/GEN/268 and G/SPS/GEN/261.

<sup>4</sup> G/SPS/GEN/204/Rev.1

<sup>5</sup> G/SPS/GEN/ENQ/12 and G/SPS/NNA/2, respectively.

Director-General invited the secretariats of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, OIE and IPPC to discuss how to further facilitate the participation of developing countries in the international standard-setting process, and SPS-related technical assistance issues. On 7 February 2001, the Deputy Director-General hosted a high-level meeting with these organizations on these issues. One immediate outcome of this meeting was a workshop on developing country participation in international standard-setting organizations held prior to the March Committee meeting. The greatest constraint to effective participation by developing countries in standard-setting bodies was identified as a lack of effective infrastructure at national level.<sup>6</sup> The SPS Committee continued its examination of the SPS Agreement and developing countries.

6. An informal meeting on technical assistance preceded the July Committee meeting. In order to develop a framework to focus technical assistance activities, the Secretariat presented a paper setting out a typology of technical assistance and Members and observer organizations related their experience.<sup>7</sup> A questionnaire, seeking information on technical assistance needs and activities, first circulated in July 1999, will be revised to solicit further information from Members.<sup>8</sup>

7. The SPS Committee continued to monitor the use of international standards, following the provisional procedure adopted in October 1997.<sup>9</sup> At its meeting in July, the Committee agreed to extend the provisional procedure for a further two years.<sup>10</sup> A review of the operation of the provisional procedure will take place by July 2003, with a view to deciding whether to continue with the same procedure, amend it or develop another one. The Third Annual Report on the Procedure to Monitor the Process of International Harmonization was adopted at the July Committee meeting.<sup>11</sup>

8. An informal meeting on criteria to formalize the observer status of international organizations preceded the March Committee meeting. 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. Consideration continued of requests for observer status from the Office international de la vigne et du vin (OIV) and the Asian Pacific Coconut Community (APCC).

9. 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>12</sup> The OIE provided written guidance on international standards on BSE and foot-and-mouth disease to the Committee.<sup>13</sup> Information on coordination between international standard-setting bodies in technical assistance activities was welcomed by the Committee.<sup>14</sup> At the March Committee meeting, the WHO presented an outline of recent activities in the area of food safety.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Codex Alimentarius (G/SPS/GEN/236) and IPPC (G/SPS/GEN/227).

<sup>7</sup> G/SPS/GEN/206, and United States (G/SPS/GEN/181/Add.1), Gabon (G/SPS/GEN/257), European Communities (G/SPS/GEN/244) and IICA (G/SPS/GEN/255).

<sup>8</sup> G/SPS/W/101.

<sup>9</sup> G/SPS/11.

<sup>10</sup> G/SPS/17.

<sup>11</sup> G/SPS/18.

<sup>12</sup> G/SPS/GEN/266.

<sup>13</sup> BSE (G/SPS/GEN/230) and foot-and-mouth disease (G/SPS/GEN/240).

<sup>14</sup> G/SPS/GEN/259.

<sup>15</sup> G/SPS/GEN/237.