

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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## REPORT (2000) 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 during 2000.

1. The Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the "SPS Committee") held three meetings in 2000: on 15-16 March, 21-22 June and 8-9 November.<sup>1</sup> At the June meeting, Mr. S.I.M. Nayyar (Pakistan) was appointed Chairman for the period 2000/01.

2. At the June meeting, the SPS Committee adopted guidelines to further the practical implementation of Article 5.5 of the Agreement (G/SPS/15). These guidelines are designed to assist national regulatory officials to avoid arbitrary or unjustifiable distinctions in the level of health risk they determine to be appropriate in different situations, if these differences result in discrimination or a disguised restriction on trade. The SPS Committee agreed to review the guidelines periodically and revise them as necessary. The first review should take place by mid-July 2003.

3. At its regular meetings, the SPS Committee considered a number of specific trade concerns, including several related to individual notifications. The issues discussed included, *inter alia*, measures related to dioxin; restrictions on tropical fresh fruits; measures affecting trade in live cattle, beef meat and bovine semen; and measures affecting canned tuna, citrus, gelatin and milled rice.

4. Members informed the SPS Committee about the recognition of disease-free areas and the use of international standards. The Secretariat circulated updated lists of National Enquiry Points and National Notification Authorities.<sup>2</sup>

5. The SPS Committee continued its discussion on the SPS Agreement and developing countries. At the March meeting, the SPS Committee agreed to focus its discussions first on the implementation of the special and differential treatment provisions. The Secretariat prepared a paper summarizing discussions to date on the provisions for special and differential treatment.<sup>3</sup> The observer from the World Bank provided information regarding development challenges in standards and agricultural trade, and the Bank's work in the area.<sup>4</sup> Implementation of the equivalence provision (Article 4) was also specifically examined at the November meeting, both in the context of the Committee's agenda item on developing country concerns and in response to the remit from the General Council to examine how to facilitate use of the provision by developing countries. A separate

<sup>1</sup> The report of the March meeting is contained in G/SPS/R/18, and that of the June meeting in G/SPS/R/19. The report of the November meeting will be circulated as G/SPS/R/20.

<sup>2</sup> G/SPS/ENQ/11, G/SPS/NNA/1 and G/SPS/GEN/27/Rev.7.

<sup>3</sup> G/SPS/W/105.

<sup>4</sup> G/SPS/GEN/195.

report on this issue will be provided to the Special Session of the General Council to be held on 14-15 December 2000.

6. The SPS Committee continued to monitor the use of international standards, following the provisional procedure it adopted in October 1997.<sup>5</sup> No new examples were identified of what Members considered to be problems with significant trade impact related to the use or non-use of relevant international standards, guidelines or recommendations. The second annual report of the monitoring procedure, adopted in October 2000 by the Committee, identified further actions undertaken by the relevant standard-setting organizations with regard to issues which had previously been raised by Members.<sup>6</sup>

7. Technical assistance needs and activities were considered at each regular meeting of the SPS Committee. Members, the Secretariat and the observer inter-governmental organizations reported on their technical assistance activities. Members were provided the opportunity to identify specific needs for technical assistance. The Secretariat circulated a questionnaire seeking information on technical assistance needs and activities, and the various responses received.<sup>7</sup> At the request of the SPS Committee, the Secretariat prepared a typology of technical assistance needs relevant to the implementation of the SPS Agreement, to serve as the basis for discussions on how to ensure that technical assistance was being provided in the most effective way possible.<sup>8</sup>

8. At the March meeting, the SPS Committee agreed 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. The SPS Committee continued consideration of the 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 continued to maintain close working relationships with the IPPC, the OIE and Codex. In June, the SPS Committee held an informal meeting with the secretariat of the WHO to discuss the on-going revision of the International Health Regulations.

10. Immediately preceding the June meeting of the SPS Committee, the Secretariat organized a workshop on the SPS Agreement and risk analysis.<sup>9</sup> The US Department of Agriculture provided funds to cover the costs of participation for officials from some least-developed countries in both the workshop and the regular SPS Committee meeting. A substantial number of participants from both developing and developed countries participated in the workshop, and subsequently in the regular meeting of the SPS Committee.

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<sup>5</sup> G/SPS/11.

<sup>6</sup> G/SPS/16.

<sup>7</sup> G/SPS/W/101, G/SPS/GEN/143/Rev.1 and Add.1, and G/SPS/GEN/181.

<sup>8</sup> G/SPS/GEN/206.

<sup>9</sup> G/SPS/GEN/209 and G/SPS/INF/13.