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Page: 1/3

## REPORT (2016) 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 2016.

1.2. The Committee held four meetings in 2016 on 9 March, 7 June, 14 September, and 9 November.<sup>1</sup> Mr Michael Wamai (Uganda) was the Chairperson for the March meeting of the Committee. The Committee elected Mr Garth Ehrhardt of Canada as the new Chairperson for 2016-2017 at 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 1 November 2016, 187 agriculture notifications of all types were circulated.

1.4. In 2016 Members posed 196 questions on 80 notifications during the Committee's review process. These questions were distributed as follows: 74% related to domestic support issues, 18% to market access, and 7% to export subsidies.<sup>2</sup> Specific concerns were also raised regarding the outstanding notifications that some Members had yet to submit to the Committee.

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 63 implementation-related issues were raised by 15 Members during 2016.<sup>3</sup> Out of these, 51 issues were discussed for the first time in 2016. 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 2016 a large number of the new issues related to the area of domestic support. The Secretariat circulated an overview of questions that have been raised under Article 18.6 since 1995.<sup>4</sup>

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%), 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.

<sup>1</sup> The summary reports of these meetings are contained in documents G/AG/R/80, G/AG/R/81, G/AG/R/82, and G/AG/R/83 (to be issued).

<sup>2</sup> See G/AG/W/151, section 2; G/AG/W/154, section 2; G/AG/W/157, section 2 and G/AG/W/158, section 2.

<sup>3</sup> See G/AG/W/151, section 1; G/AG/W/154, section 1; G/AG/W/157, section 1; and G/AG/W/158, section 1.

<sup>4</sup> G/AG/GEN/138.

<sup>5</sup> G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.23-26.

1.7. The Committee on Agriculture held one informal meeting during 2016, in which Members discussed a paper from a number of Cairns Group Members entitled "Trends in Domestic Support".<sup>6</sup> The paper highlighted the trends in domestic support in respect of ten Members included in the document based on their dominant share in global agricultural trade. Using notified domestic support data from these Members for the period 2006-2010, the paper showed the evolution of support under various domestic support categories.

1.8. In the March and November meetings, the Committee conducted its consultations under Article 18.5 to review the normal growth of world agricultural trade in the context of export subsidy commitments. A background note by the Secretariat<sup>7</sup> showed the evolution of world agricultural trade in respect of a number of products or product categories which have been considered potentially more prone to the provision of export subsidies. To complement the information provided in the Secretariat paper which analyzed most commodities in volume terms, a group of Members circulated a paper examining those trends in terms of the value of trade.

1.9. With respect to the work of the Committee related specifically to NFIDCs, the WTO list of NFIDCs<sup>8</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) took place in both the March and November meetings of the Committee. As was normal practice, the monitoring exercise was undertaken on the basis of Table NF:1 notifications by donor Members, contributions by Members and observer organizations<sup>9</sup>, as well as a background note prepared by the Secretariat.<sup>10</sup>

1.10. 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>11</sup>, as well as in the framework of issues and proposals referred to it by the General Council.

1.11. 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 and TRQ administration during the 2016 meetings of the Committee. Members exchanged views on the implementation of the Nairobi Decision on Export Competition and Members with scheduled export subsidy reduction commitments provided regular updates on the steps taken to implement the Decision.

1.12. With respect to the Nairobi Decision on Export Competition, the first dedicated discussion on export competition held after the Nairobi Ministerial, occurred during the June 2016 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 26 July 2016<sup>12</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>13</sup> The Cairns Group submitted a paper<sup>14</sup> which supplemented the Secretariat's background document and drew some key conclusions from the analysis.

1.13. In the Nairobi Decision on Export Competition Members had also agreed to review the provisions on international food aid within the Committee on Agriculture monitoring of the

<sup>6</sup> G/AG/W/150.

<sup>7</sup> G/AG/W/32/Rev.15 and G/AG/W/32/Rev.15/Corr.1.

<sup>8</sup> G/AG/5/Rev.10.

<sup>9</sup> G/AG/GEN/136 (submission by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture) and G/AG/GEN/137 (submission by the International Grain Council)

<sup>10</sup> In the G/AG/W/42/series.

<sup>11</sup> WT/MIN(01)/17, para. 2.

<sup>12</sup> G/AG/W/125/Rev.5, G/AG/W/125/Rev.5/Add.1, G/AG/W/125/Rev.5/Add.2, G/AG/W/125/Rev.5/Add.3, G/AG/W/125/Rev.5/Add.4.

<sup>13</sup> G/AG/W/155.

<sup>14</sup> G/AG/W/144, 29 May 2015.

implementation of the Marrakesh Ministerial Decision of April 1994 on Measures Concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least-developed and net food-importing developing countries. Members shared views on how the Committee should conduct this review during the Committee's monitoring of the NFIDC Decision in November.

1.14. In September the Committee held an information session on enhancing transparency and the CoA review process. The session included a presentation on online sources of information useful for the work of the CoA and Members sharing of experiences with respect to the preparation and submission of notifications and the implementation of the review process of the Agreement on Agriculture. The information session produced a number of recommendations including organizing additional events to promote exchanges among delegates; and enhancing the use of available data in the WTO by, among other things, exploring options for presenting summarized notified information and synthesis of issues raised in the CoA review process (see G/AG/GEN/138). The Secretariat held an additional information session in the margins of the November CoA meeting to present to Members the upcoming system for online submission of agriculture notifications.

1.15. The WTO's Agriculture and Commodities Division delivered the seventh Geneva-based workshop on agriculture notifications on 12-15 July 2016. 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 25 participants from developing country capitals were funded by the WTO, and six participants 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 2016 workshop was devoted to individual sessions with AGCD staff, offering participants the opportunity to consult on unfulfilled notification obligations. In addition to the notification workshop, the Secretariat conducted four national seminars that included the Agreement on Agriculture and agriculture notifications in Chad, Guinea, Montenegro and Tunisia.

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. Ad hoc observer status for the Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Cooperation (IICA) was renewed in November. No consensus has been reached as regards requests for observer status by eleven other international organizations.

1.17. The Committee agreed to hold regular meetings on 7-8 March, 7-8 June, and 17-18 October in 2017.

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