

## Eighty-fifth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization

This note<sup>1</sup> describes the most important topics discussed during the Eighty-Fifth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization (WTO)<sup>2</sup>, which the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) attended in an observer capacity.

IICA has been an observer of this Organization before the Committee of Agriculture since 2010 for a number of reasons. First, the Member States of IICA are also part of the WTO. Secondly, the topics that the members of the Committee discuss in the areas of trade and agricultural policy are important for managing international trade within the framework of agricultural value chains. In these meetings, the country's trade delegates monitor the WTO Member States'<sup>3</sup> implementation of the commitments established in the Agreement on Agriculture and discuss the trade measures that their governments implement, or wish to implement, in the area of agriculture. It is important to bear in mind that such measures must be conveyed to each country via notifications.



### 1. Topics addressed during the meeting

Agricultural notifications are based mainly on the three foundations (known as “the three pillars”) of the Agreement on Agriculture: market access, export competition, and domestic support<sup>4</sup>. In addition, other matters relating to the provisions of the Agreement were discussed such as food safety, compliance of the countries when notifying, differentiated and special treatment, building capacities on the topics included in the Agreement on Agriculture, and requests for becoming an observer of the Committee on Agriculture, among others.

#### 1.1. Agricultural notifications related to countries in the Americas

As shown in **Table 1**, three Member States of IICA (Brazil, Canada, and the United States) raised questions on the pillar of **market access**. On the other hand, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, and the United States addressed specific questions raised by the European Union, New Zealand, and Ukraine. In this meeting, countries in the Americas raised questions or were questioned on dairy products, wine, legumes, and sugar. Additionally, The United States and Canada raised questions regarding dairy products and wine, specifically.

<sup>1</sup> Prepared by IICA's Flagship Project “Competitiveness and Sustainability of Agricultural Chains for Food Security and Economic Development” on November 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Held on 17 and 18 October 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland.

<sup>3</sup> To date, WTO has 164 Member States, of which 33 are members of IICA, with the exception of The Bahamas, which is an Observer Country.

<sup>4</sup> In the context of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, any domestic support in favor of agricultural producers is subject to regulation. There are basically two categories of domestic support: a) support with no, or minimal, trade-distortion effects (referred to as Green Box measures); and b) trade-distortion support (Amber Box measures). In WTO terminology, subsidies in general are identified by “boxes”, which are given the colors of traffic lights: Green (permitted), amber (slow down, must be reduced), and red (forbidden).

**Table 1. Matters raised regarding the implementation of agricultural commitments**

Countries consulted	Country consulted	Topic discussed
<b>European Union</b>	<b>Argentina</b>	Argentina's reimbursement program
	Russia	Russian Federation's subsidy on transportation of exports via railroad
	<b>Brazil</b>	Brazil's reimbursement program
	Thailand	Import permits for wheat feed required by Thailand
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>Canada</b>	New programs in the dairy production sector
		Tariff-rate quota for cheese and domestic support of Canada
<b>Canada</b>	European Union	European Union's intervention stocks of skim milk powder
	India	India's policies on legumes
	<b>The United States of America</b>	United States' policies on dairy products
<b>Australia</b>	India	India's quantitative restrictions
	Philippines	Philippines' rice waiver
<b>The United States of America</b>	Indonesia	Indonesia's new regulation on milk.
<b>Brazil</b>	Pakistan	Pakistan's policies on sugar
<b>Ukraine</b>	<b>Brazil</b>	Brazil's domestic support program
<b>Australia, New Zealand the United States of America</b>	<b>Canada</b>	Canada's new types of dairy ingredients
<b>New Zealand, the United States of America</b>	<b>Canada</b>	Canada's policy on selling wine

Source: Eighty-fifth Regular Meeting of the WTO Committee on Agriculture, October 2017.

Also reviewed at the meeting were notifications submitted by four IICA Member States (Barbados, Costa Rica, the United States of America, and Jamaica) related to tariff quotas<sup>5</sup> and domestic support (**Table 2**).

**Table 2. Topics discussed in connection with agricultural notifications**

Countries consulted	Subject of the notification
<b>Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Norway, and Switzerland</b>	Notifications related to imports related to the commitments under tariff quotas and other types of quotas
<b>Australia, Barbados, Costa Rica, Cuba, India, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Mali, Senegal, Turkey, Ukraine and the United States of America</b>	Notifications related to domestic support commitments
<b>Japan, Turkey</b>	Notifications related to the introduction or modification of internal assistance measures that are exempt from the reduction

Source: Eighty-fifth Regular Meeting of the WTO Committee on Agriculture, October 2017.

Lastly, Table 3 shows a series of notifications submitted to the WTO Secretariat that were not subject to consultation. However, it is possible they could be reviewed in subsequent meetings. In this meeting, nine IICA Member States (Barbados, Canada, Costa Rica, the United States of America, Guatemala, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, and Peru) presented notifications but were not subject to questioning.

<sup>5</sup> A tariff quota is a limit on exports or imports of a good, which is applied to a specific quality of the good concerned or for a specific period. A tariff quota is applied for a certain period to a maximum amount of goods, in which case the exports or imports are exempt from paying custom duties, or a preferential tariff is applied.

**Table 3. Agriculture notifications submitted that were not subject to questioning**

Countries that submitted notifications	Subject of the notification
<b>Costa Rica, Moldova, the United States of America</b>	Notifications related to the administration of tariff quota and other quota commitments
<b>Israel, Nicaragua, Philippines, South Africa</b>	Notifications related to imports under tariff quota and other quota commitments
<b>Costa Rica, Japan, Chinese Taipei, Barbados, European Union, Israel, Malaysia and Marroco</b>	Notifications related to special safeguard <sup>6</sup>
<b>Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Macau, Mali, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Panama, Singapore, Thailand, Chinese Taipei, Ukraine</b>	Notifications related to domestic support commitments
<b>Australia, Guatemala and New Zealand</b>	Notifications related to new or modified internal assistance measures of reduction
<b>Barbados, Jamaica, Macau, Moldova, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, Singapore, Macedonia, Zambia</b>	Notifications related to export subsidies commitments

Source: Eighty-fifth Regular Meeting of the WTO Committee on Agriculture, October 2017.

## 1.2. Other topics addressed

- *Renewal of ad hoc observer status of IICA.* During this meeting, IICA's status as an observer intergovernmental organization of the WTO Committee on Agriculture was renewed. It should be underscored that renewal is carried out each year and requires the approval of all Member States of the WTO.
- *Request for ad hoc observer status by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).* During the upcoming regular meetings of the Committee on Agriculture, the request by IFPRI to become an Observer Member of the Committee on Agriculture will continue to be reviewed.
- It was agreed that the next regular meeting of the Committee on Agriculture will be held on 21 and 22 February. This will be the first meeting following the Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference. The document on food safety drafted by IICA will be presented at this meeting. WTO requests international organizations with an observer member status to present such a document each year.

## 2. Other matters of competence of the Committee

As a side-activity to the meeting, IICA attended the presentation of the book entitled: "Agriculture, development, and the global trading system: 2000-2015: Synopsis," drafted by IFPRI. This publication is available at <https://www.ifpri.org/node/18003>.

These type of activities are part of the training work of the WTO and the Secretariat of the Committee related to the agricultural trade topics linked to the provisions of the Agreement on Agriculture and other WTO agreements. These may be presented by member states, observer organizations or civil society such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or research centers.

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<sup>6</sup> Safeguards are exceptional measures applied by countries to temporarily protect specific domestic industries that are damaged or face a threat of serious harm due to a significant increase in goods circulating on the domestic market under conditions that can be qualified as unfair competition.