



Seventy-eighth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization

The purpose of this technical note¹ is to report on the main topics discussed at the Seventy-eighth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization (WTO)², in which the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) participated as an Observer Member.

This document reports on the current compliance level (up until September 2015) of countries in the Americas with regards to their agricultural notification obligations. The main topics discussed at the meeting are detailed below.

1. Matters addressed at the Seventy-eighth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the WTO, September 2015

The main issues discussed during the meeting can be divided into two large groups: the process of reviewing notifications on agriculture that have been submitted by the countries to the WTO (known as the review process), and other matters included in the Committee's meeting agenda.

The specific issues that were addressed during the first session of the meeting in September of this year were:

1.1. Notifications on agriculture that were discussed during the meeting in September 2015

Of the countries in the Americas, two IICA Member Countries (Canada and the United States) raised questions to other countries pertaining to domestic support,³ tariffs⁴ and export subsidies.⁵ Furthermore, Brazil and Costa Rica were asked to respond to specific questions raised by the United States, which are listed in Table 1.

¹ Prepared by the IICA Flagship Project "Competitiveness and Sustainability of Agricultural Chains for Food Security and Economic Development."

² The meeting took place from September 24-25, 2015 in Geneva, Switzerland.

³ Within the framework of the Agreement on Agriculture of the WTO, all domestic support in favor of agricultural producers is subject to limits. And therefore, there are basically two categories of domestic support: subsidies that do not distort trade, or at most cause minimal distortion (referred to as green box measures); or support measures considered as distorting trade (referred to as 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 — i.e. to be reduced), red (forbidden).

⁴ A quota is a possible limitation imposed on the import or export of certain goods, in physical terms or for a certain period of time. A tariff rate quota is applied when, during a certain period of time and for a maximum volume of goods, exports or imports are exempt from the payment of customs duties or a preferential tariff is applied to them.

⁵ An economic advantage that a government provides, directly or indirectly, to producers of certain goods or services, in order to improve their competitive position. Some economic aid measures are prohibited because they distort trade (such as export subsidies), while others are subject to reduction commitments. The countries must submit these notifications to the WTO on an annual basis.

Table 1. Matters relevant to the implementation of commitments

Countries raising questions	Countries with which questions were raised	Topics of questions
United States	Brazil	Brazil's domestic support programs.
United States	China	Underutilization of quotas
European Union	China	China's maize subsidies.
United States	China	China's cotton policies.
United States	Costa Rica	Costa Rica's compliance with Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS) commitments for rice.
Australia	European Union	The European Union's dairy policies.
European Union	India	India's support price for wheat.
United States	India	India's cotton policies.
Australia, European Union	India	India's sugar export subsidies.
United States	India	India's export assistance programs.
Australia	Indonesia	Indonesia's restrictions on importation of sugar.
Australia, Thailand	Korea	Korea's rice imports.
European Union	Russia	Russia's wheat export tax.
Australia, New Zealand	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka's increase in milk powder tariffs.
Australia, New Zealand	Switzerland	Switzerland's export subsidy budget.
Canada , European Union	Turkey	Turkey's domestic support and export subsidies.
United States	Turkey	Turkey's destination of wheat flour sale.

Source: Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the WTO, September 2015.

The meeting then turned to the review of the notifications that various members submitted to the WTO, listed in Table 2. Of the countries in the Americas, four IICA Member Countries (the United States, Costa Rica, Honduras and Canada) were asked to provide details regarding notifications submitted this year pertaining to tariffs, domestic support, and export subsidies.

Table 2. Points raised in connection with notifications on agriculture

Countries with which questions were raised	Topics of the notifications
Switzerland and United States	Administration of tariff and other quota commitments.
European Union and United States	Imports under tariff and other quota commitments.
China, Costa Rica , Honduras , India, Oman, Pakistan, Russia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates	Domestic support commitments.
Canada	Export subsidy commitments.

Source: Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the WTO, September 2015.

Finally, there are notifications that were submitted to the WTO Secretariat about which no questions were raised during the meeting by any country (see Table 3). However, members may still submit them to the review process at subsequent meetings of the Committee on Agriculture. In this case, five IICA Member Countries (Guatemala, Trinidad and Tobago, Honduras, Haiti and Peru) submitted notifications to the WTO and did not receive any requests for clarification from other countries.

Table 3. Notifications about which no questions were raised

Countries that submitted notifications	Topics of the notifications
Russia	Imports within the framework of tariff and other quota commitments.
Japan, Chinese Taipei, South Africa	Special safeguard.
Albania, Cuba, Georgia, Guatemala, Trinidad and Tobago	Domestic support commitments.
Guatemala and Honduras	New or modified domestic support measures exempt from reduction.
European Union, Haiti , Moldova, Peru , Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago , United Arab Emirates, Zimbabwe	Export subsidy commitments.

Source: Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the WTO, September 2015.

1.2. Other agenda items of the Seventy-eighth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the WTO, September 2015

Another agenda item discussed during the meeting was the scheduling of the meetings of the Committee on Agriculture for the year 2016. The following tentative dates were agreed upon:

- January or March 2016. To be determined.
- June 7-8, 2016.
- September 14-15, 2016.
- November 9-10, 2016.

2. Current status of IICA Member States' compliance with notification obligations

Some member countries of IICA have assumed the commitment of submitting annual notifications to the WTO regarding measures undertaken in relation to tariffs, special safeguards,⁶ domestic support and export subsidies.

The following table lists the IICA Member States that have assumed commitments with regard to submitting notifications about tariffs, and specifies the level of compliance therein. As shown in Table 4, Barbados, Guatemala and Venezuela are the three countries in the Americas that have overdue notifications pertaining to tariffs.

Table 4. IICA Member States' compliance with notification obligations pertaining to tariffs

Country ⁷	Year of most recent notification	Percent compliance
Canada, Nicaragua, and Panama	2014	100%
Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, United States	2013	100%
Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Dominican Republic	2012	94%
Colombia	2010	84%
Venezuela	2008	63%
Guatemala	2007	68%
Barbados	2000	32%

Source: WTO Document: G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.22.

⁶ Emergency corrective mechanism used temporarily by a country to protect national industries that are damaged or face severe threat of damage, due to a significant increase in the amount of goods that flow through the domestic market in conditions of fair competition. A special safeguard is a temporary increase in import duty to deal with import surges or price falls, under provisions that are special to the Agreement on Agriculture.

⁷ The IICA member countries that do not appear in this table have not assumed WTO commitments regarding this matter.

Table 5 lists the IICA Member States that have assumed the commitment of submitting annual notifications to the WTO regarding special safeguards. Venezuela, Barbados and Colombia are the three countries in the Americas that are over 5 years overdue in submitting notifications pertaining to special safeguards.

Table 5. IICA Member States' compliance with notification obligations pertaining to special safeguards

Country ⁸	Year of most recent notification	Percent compliance
Canada, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Uruguay	2014	100%
Ecuador, United States, Mexico	2012	94%
El Salvador, Guatemala	2011	89%
Colombia	2010	84%
Barbados	2009	79%
Venezuela	Before the year 2000	21%

Source: WTO Document: G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.22.

On the other hand, all member countries of IICA, except for the Bahamas, an Observer Member of the WTO, have notification obligations pertaining to domestic support for agricultural production. Table 6 specifies the percent compliance of each country in this regard. In general, almost all countries have overdue notifications pertaining to domestic support.

Table 6. IICA Member States' compliance with notification obligations pertaining to domestic support

Countries	Year of most recent notification	Percent compliance
Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama, Uruguay	2014	100%
Brazil, Chile, Honduras, Jamaica, Paraguay, `Saint Vincent and the Grenadines`, Trinidad and Tobago	2013	100%
Canada, Ecuador, United States, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic	2012	94%
Colombia, Peru	2010	84%
Argentina	2008	74%
Mexico	2007	68%
Barbados	2006	63%
Bolivia	2005	58%
Guyana	2004	53%
El Salvador	2002	42%
Venezuela	Before the year 2000	21%
Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Dominica, Grenada	No notifications since 1995	0%

Source: WTO Document: G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.22.

All member countries of IICA, except for The Bahamas,⁹ have assumed the commitment of submitting notifications regarding export subsidies related to reductions in budgetary outlays. Table 7 specifies the percent compliance of each country in this regard. Several Caribbean countries and Venezuela have the greatest number of overdue notifications.

⁸ The IICA member countries that do not appear in this table have not assumed WTO commitments regarding this matter.

⁹ Bahamas is in the process of joining the WTO; it is currently an Observer Member, so its commitments in relation to this matter have not been defined.

Table 7. IICA Member States' compliance with notification obligations pertaining to export subsidies

Countries	Year of most recent notification	Percent compliance
Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay	2014	100%
Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Paraguay, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	2013	100%
Ecuador, United States, Guatemala, Mexico	2012	94%
Colombia	2010	84%
Barbados	2006	63%
Bolivia	2005	58%
Guyana	2004	53%
Panama	2003	41%
El Salvador	2002	42%
Saint Lucia, Suriname	2000	26%
Venezuela	Before the year 2000	21%
Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts, and Nevis	No notifications since 1995	0%

Source: WTO Document: G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.22.

Finally, some member countries of IICA are required to submit notifications pertaining to export subsidies related to their total exports. These countries and their percent compliance are detailed in Table 8, which shows that Venezuela and Colombia are the most delayed in submitting these notifications.

Table 8. IICA Member States' compliance with notification obligations pertaining to export subsidies related to total exports

Countries	Year of most recent notification	Percent compliance
Costa Rica, Uruguay	2014	100%
Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Honduras	2013	100%
United States, Mexico	2012	95%
Colombia	2010	84%
Venezuela	Before the year 2000	21%

Source: WTO Document: G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.22.

3. Other topics discussed during the meeting

IICA has been an Observer Member of the Committee on Agriculture of the WTO since the year 2010¹⁰ and, as established by the WTO, the Observer status of the international organizations that participate in these meetings is renewed annually at the regular meeting in November.

Since the WTO took the decision that there would be no meeting of the Committee on Agriculture in the month of November, due to the upcoming Ministerial Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, in December 2015, one of the topics discussed at this meeting was the renewal of IICA's *ad hoc* Observer status, thereby allowing the Institute to attend the regular meetings that will take place in 2016.

4. Contact persons at the Institute

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¹⁰ In addition to IICA, the other organizations that have Observer status in the Committee on Agriculture of the WTO are: The World Bank; the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); the International Grains Council; the International Monetary Fund; the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); and the World Food Program of United Nations (WFP).