

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



2018

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This note outlines the main points discussed during the Eighty-eighth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization (WTO), held 25-26 September 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland. The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) took part in the meeting in an observer capacity.

At these meetings, the Committee on Agriculture monitors WTO member country compliance with the commitments established in the Agreement on Agriculture. Delegates from the countries review and discuss the trade measures about which the WTO has been notified under the agreement, as well as other matters that fall within the Committee's purview, such as compliance with notifications related to agriculture.

1. Matters addressed during the meeting

This document highlights some of the points discussed at the meeting that are of special significance to the IICA and WTO countries. They include trade measure notifications related to market access, export competition and domestic supports, and others matters covered by the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, such as the countries' compliance with notifications and follow-up to the ministerial decisions on agriculture adopted at the Bali (2013) and Nairobi (2015) ministerial conferences.



1.1. Notifications on agriculture

Of the countries of the Americas, three IICA Member States (Canada, the United States and Guatemala) raised concerns about measures that had been notified related to export subsidies, domestic supports¹ and market access. Canada, the United States and Suriname also responded to specific questions raised by other WTO members (Table 1).

On this occasion, the products and issues most discussed by the countries of the Americas were dairy products, domestic supports, soybeans, cotton, wheat, pulse, rice, corn, poultry and wine.

Table 1. Matters raised by members relevant to the implementation of agricultural commitments

Countries the matter was raised by	Country with which the matter was raised	Matter involved
Canada	China	Premium contributions for rice, corn and wheat seeds
Australia, New Zealand, European Union, and the United States	India	Skim milk powder export subsidies
United States	Thailand	Import licensing for meat
Australia, Canada , European Union, India, Japan, New Zealand	United States	Proposed domestic support measures
United States	Zimbabwe	Export incentives
Australia, New Zealand, and United States	Canada	New milk ingredient class
United States	Canada	Wine sale policy
Australia, Canada , Russia, and United States	India	Pulses policy
Australia, New Zealand, United States		Merchandise exports scheme (MEIS)
New Zealand and United States	Indonesia	Soybean imports
Australia and Guatemala	Pakistan	Sugar policies
United States	Pakistan	Wheat export subsidies
United States	Russia	Railway subsidy for exports
United States	Suriname	Poultry tariffs

Source: Eighty-eighth Regular Meeting of the WTO Committee on Agriculture, September 2018.

The meeting also discussed the notifications submitted by five IICA Member States (Canada, Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, the United States) in response to questions raised about notifications involving tariff quotas, domestic support and export subsidies. Only Japan and Philippines submitted notifications in the context of special safeguard (Table 2).

Table 2. Matters raised in connection with agricultural notifications

Country with which the matter was raised	Matter involved in the notification
Canada	Administration of tariff and other quota commitments
Ecuador, Guatemala, Malasia, Norway, South Africa	Imports under tariff and other quota commitments
Canada, Ecuador, Panama, United States , Australia, Armenia, Bahrain, Egypt, European Union, India, Kyrgyz Republic, Papua New Guinea, Russia.	Domestic support commitments
Ecuador	New or modified domestic support measures exempt from reduction
Panama , Norway	Notifications related to export subsidy commitments

Source: Eighty-eighth Regular Meeting of the WTO Committee on Agriculture, September 2018.

¹ Under the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, all domestic support for agricultural producers is rules-based. There are basically two types of domestic support: measures that do not distort trade, or at most cause minimal distortion (known as green box measures); and trade-distorting supports (known as amber box measures). In WTO terminology, subsidies in general are identified by "boxes" given the colors of traffic lights: green (permitted), amber (slow down/need to be reduced), and red (forbidden).

1.2. Other matters

- Compliance with notification obligations: Report from the Secretariat.
- The Chairperson urged members to fulfill their obligations by getting caught up with outstanding notifications and improving the information submitted, ensuring that it was as complete as possible and made available and submitted on time, to promote transparency and smooth trade.
- The Secretariat also presented its report on export subsidies, export credits and export credit guarantees or insurance programs, international food aid, and agricultural exporting state trading enterprises, within the framework of the 2013 Bali Decision on export competition.
- Furthermore, the Secretariat updated the list of outstanding responses to questions raised during the review process at the meetings of the Committee on Agriculture held from 2012–2017. As of 13 September 2018, 63 questions remained unanswered and 30 members had failed to answer the questions concerned. The members from the Americas that appear on the list include Brazil, Canada, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, and the United States.
- The Cairns Group submitted a document as a supplement to the export competition review in which it provided information about:
 - the response rate to the export competition questionnaire circulated among the members;
 - the status of the scheduled entitlements included in the lists;
 - clarification of the export credit maximum repayment terms for certain European Union Member States;
 - the notified use of interim export subsidy flexibilities under the Nairobi Decision.
- Finally, the meeting discussed the document containing the responses to the questions raised by the members in the export competition annual dedicated discussion. The members that appear in the document include Argentina, Brazil, Canada and the United States.

Institutional contact points

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