

Issues discussed at the Sixty-seventh Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization (WTO)

Background

- Technical Note No. 05-12, published on June 18, and a note published in the CAESPA bulletin for September 2012, which give an overview of the issues addressed during the meetings of the WTO Committee on Agriculture held in March and June 2012.
- The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) took part in those meetings in an observer capacity.

Issues addressed

The main issues discussed at the Sixty-seventh Regular Meeting of the WTO Committee on Agriculture, held on September 20 in Geneva, Switzerland, were:

I. Questions related to the implementation by the countries of their commitments under the Agreement on Agriculture

Argentina repeated its concern, raised at both the March and June meetings, about market obstructions in the form of regulations that have no scientific or technical justification, which is incompatible with the WTO agreements.

China expressed concern at the European Union's use of legal recourse with regard to the procedure established in Article XXVIII of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in relation to poultry products.

Canada and the United States raised the question of Costa Rica's failure to comply with its commitment in regard to the Aggregate Measurement of Support.¹

The United States questioned India's wheat export policy.

The United States questioned Indonesia's quantitative and other restrictions on imports of certain food products.

Ver recuadro abajo.

II. Specific concerns related to notifications presented by WTO member countries.

The following were some of the most important:

Notifications presented by *United States* and *Tunisia* related to the importation and administration of tariff and other types of quotas.²

¹ "AGGREGATE MEASUREMENT OF SUPPORT" MEANS THE ANNUAL LEVEL OF SUPPORT, EXPRESSED IN MONETARY TERMS, PROVIDED FOR AN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT IN FAVOR OF THE PRODUCERS OF THE BASIC AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT OR NON-PRODUCT-SPECIFIC SUPPORT PROVIDED IN FAVOR OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS IN GENERAL, OTHER THAN SUPPORT PROVIDED UNDER PROGRAMS THAT QUALIFY AS EXEMPT FROM REDUCTION UNDER ANNEX 2 OF THE WTO AGREEMENT THE AGREEMENT ON AGRICULTURE.

² A TARIFF QUOTA IS THE VOLUME OR AMOUNT OF IMPORTS OF A GIVEN PRODUCT THAT A COUNTRY AGREES TO ALLOW INTO ITS MARKET,

Notifications presented by *Japan* on the context of the special safeguard.³

Notifications from *Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Honduras, India, Israel, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Panama, Switzerland, Thailand, the European Union, United States, Uruguay* and *Zambia* on domestic support commitments.⁴

Notifications presented by *Canada* and *India* on commitments related to export subsidies.⁵

Forthcoming events

The next meeting of the WTO Committee on Agriculture is scheduled for November 14, 2012. We shall be reporting on the results in December. For more information, please contact Adriana Campos Azofeifa, Specialist in Policies and Trade Negotiations of the Center for Strategic Analysis for Agriculture (CAESPA) and Coordinator of the WTO Regional Reference Center at IICA, by e-mail (adriana.campos@iica.int) or phone ((506) 2216-0170).

Russia and Vanuatu took part in a meeting of the Committee on Agriculture for the first time. Both joined the WTO recently (on August 22 and 24, respectively).

PAYING TARIFFS THAT MAY BE REDUCED OVER TIME, AS AGREED BY TWO OR MORE COUNTRIES.

³ ARTICLE 5 OF THE WTO AGREEMENT ON AGRICULTURE ESTABLISHES A SPECIAL SAFEGUARD THAT CAN ONLY BE APPLIED TO CERTAIN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS. THIS MECHANISM ALLOWS COUNTRIES TO RAISE THE TARIFF ON A PRODUCT WHEN IMPORTS EXCEED THE PERCENTAGE NEGOTIATED, OR WHEN THE PRICES OF THE PRODUCT FALL SIGNIFICANTLY. WHEN THIS SAFEGUARD IS APPLIED, THE TARIFF CAN BE RAISED TO THE SAME LEVEL PAID BY THIRD COUNTRIES, OR TO THE LEVEL APPLIED BEFORE THE TRADE AGREEMENT CAME INTO FORCE.

⁴ IN AGRICULTURE, "DOMESTIC SUPPORT" MEANS ANY DOMESTIC SUBSIDY OR OTHER MEASURE WHICH ACTS TO MAINTAIN PRODUCER PRICES AT LEVELS ABOVE THOSE PREVAILING IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE; DIRECT PAYMENTS TO PRODUCERS, INCLUDING DEFICIENCY PAYMENTS, AND INPUT AND MARKETING COST REDUCTION MEASURES AVAILABLE ONLY FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.

⁵ AN EXPORT SUBSIDY IS A BENEFIT CONFERRED ON A FIRM BY THE GOVERNMENT THAT IS CONTINGENT ON EXPORTS.