



Our  
Commitment:  
Results



**The agricultural and sanitary and phytosanitary issues that  
will be discussed at the Eleventh Ministerial Conference  
of the World Trade Organization**



By  
Adriana Campos Azofeifa, Eric Bolaños Ledezma, Nadia Monge Hernández.

November, 2017

## IICA and the WTO

*Inasmuch as trade policy, agricultural trade and negotiations related to agriculture are priority topics for IICA, the Institute attaches particular attention to them. Following the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the inclusion of agriculture in multilateral trade negotiations and the subsequent creation of the WTO have resulted in permanent changes in such negotiations. Therefore, IICA has been making adjustments in its cooperation actions in order to take into account the effect of such negotiations on the formulation of policies, and to contribute to the implementation of appropriate actions in its member countries.*

*With the November 2003 launch in Doha, Qatar, of a new round of multilateral trade negotiations under the aegis of the WTO, known as the Doha Development Agenda, the topic of agriculture has taken on a new dimension. IICA, convinced that trade must contribute to the development and well-being of the peoples of the Americas, especially in its rural sectors, and in keeping with its commitment to support the competitive, sustainable and inclusive development of agriculture, has strengthened its relations with the WTO. The Institute has been paying particular attention to the discussions taking place in the WTO on agriculture and related topics, such as sanitary and phytosanitary measures and intellectual property rights related to trade. With regard to the latter point, the decision was made to develop annual joint work programs which include Regional Workshops and other technical training activities at IICA.*



## The agricultural and sanitary and phytosanitary issues that will be discussed at the Eleventh Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization

The purpose of this note is to provide the 34 Member States of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) with information about the main trade policy issues related to agriculture and sanitary and phytosanitary matters that will be discussed at the Eleventh Ministerial Conference (hereinafter, MC11) of the World Trade Organization, which will take place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from December 10-13, 2017. It is worth noting that this will be the third time that a ministerial conference will have taken place in the Americas, and the first time in a South American country.

IICA is an observer member of the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Committee) of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Furthermore, all of IICA's Member States belong to the WTO .

Provided below is information about the importance of this meeting for the countries of the Americas, the matters that will be discussed, and the expected outcomes.

### 1. Why is this meeting important for the countries of the Americas?



At this meeting, the countries of the Americas will be able to take part in the discussions concerning potential changes and trends in the rules governing agricultural trade. This continent carries considerable weight, given the important role that it plays in global agriculture and trade in agricultural goods. This applies not only to developed countries like the United States and Canada, but also to all the developing countries that are agricultural exporters or net food importers.

It should be noted that most countries in the Americas and most of the members of the WTO are developing nations. Their ability to participate effectively and tap the benefits of the decisions taken depend on their institutional capabilities for implementing the rules and regulations of the WTO multilateral trade system (for example, the Agreement on Agriculture and the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures), and navigating (regional and national) negotiation and institutional coordination strategies and processes that have an impact on agricultural trade and competitiveness. Within the framework of the Agreement on Agriculture, it is important to be familiar with the rules already in place and those under discussion dealing with tariff quotas, special safeguards, export subsidies, domestic support, state trading enterprises and public stockholding for food security purposes.

The countries of the Americas that will be attending include the major agricultural exporters, such as Argentina, Brazil, Canada, the USA, Colombia and Mexico; and net importers of agricultural products like Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Venezuela, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Honduras, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago. Of particular interest to the latter will be the decisions taken on food security and food aid.



The fact that this event is being held in Argentina is especially important because that country is not only a leader in the agricultural negotiations, but also forms part of alliances of major trading nations, such as the Cairns Group and the G-20. Therefore, the alliances and negotiating groups established among IICA member countries are of key importance, as they will be able to press, as a bloc, for decisions and reforms on issues such as tariff reductions. Some of the groups set up by IICA member countries for the agricultural negotiations are the G-33 and the Tropical Products Group. Susana Malcorra, Chair of the Conference has stated that Argentina views this activity as a key element of its integration with the rest of the world, and as a reaffirmation of the country's commitment to ensuring positive and substantive results that will translate into tangible benefits for the world's citizens, and further deepen the economic and trade integration of all the countries in line with the commitments of the 2030 Agenda.



Furthermore, this meeting will address not only quantitative agricultural policy issues but also other aspects of agricultural trade, such as customs procedures and infrastructure (trade facilitation), sanitary and phytosanitary standards, and the environment and development (special and differentiated treatment for developing economies).

It will also be possible to learn about the trade positions and policies of the major economies of the Americas, Spain (an IICA Associate Member and the country where the IICA Delegation for Europe is located) and the Institute's permanent observer countries (Russia, Israel, Japan, Egypt, Korea and the European Union, among others). Hence, the importance of following closely the discussions that will be taking place in Buenos Aires next month.

In a high-level meeting such as this one, countries also have the opportunity to inform other members of the challenges they face in fulfilling the commitments assumed within the WTO, and of their international trade concerns. Here, the policy and institutional needs of the Latin American and Caribbean countries take on great importance, especially those of the developing countries (DCs) and least developed countries (LDCs).

Finally, it should be remembered that the countries of the Americas will have a say in the multilateral trade policy decisions taken, including issues related to agriculture and sanitary and phytosanitary measures (see sections 4 and 5 of this document).

## 2. What is a Ministerial Conference and who takes part in it?

The Ministerial Conference is the WTO's most important decision-making bodies and the highest-level governing body within its organizational structure.

The ministers of trade and economic and foreign affairs of the WTO's 164 member countries meet every two years to discuss and make decisions about various aspects of the WTO trade agreements, including the Agreement on Agriculture and the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.

During the two years prior to each Ministerial Conference, the missions of the countries, working with various WTO bodies, review and discuss trade rules and monitor implementation of the previous ministerial declarations and the mandates issued under the different legal instruments adopted since the Uruguay Round and up to the Doha Round.

The participation of ministries of agriculture in these conferences can vary. Not all delegations are in a position to send representatives of that or other government departments. However, their opinions with respect to the negotiations and agricultural matters should be taken into account and form part of the national position of each WTO member country.

The WTO also invites some representatives of civil society — [non-governmental organizations \(NGOs\)](#) — and the media to follow developments by means of updates that its Department of Foreign Affairs distributes regularly during the Ministerial Conference.

In fact, the WTO is mandated to engage in constant dialogue with NGOs and promote transparency in its dealings with them to strengthen the process of cooperation. The members recognize that the more organizations of this kind know about the WTO's activities and the role that it performs with respect to trade rules, the greater the public awareness that can be created on the importance of the multilateral trade system. This relationship is based on the text of paragraph 2, Article V of the Agreement of Marrakech under which the WTO was created, and the mandate of July 1996 (Document WT/L/162). These civil society organizations can participate in the discussions of the Ministerial Conferences, submitting their positions in writing, which are distributed among the member countries.



The communication media are invited to help disseminate information about the work of the organization, the issues it addresses and the trade rules it adopts that civil society, firms, agribusinesses, producers and other actors in agricultural trade (and in trade in general) are responsible for putting in practice in their dealings with other economies.

IICA will be attending MC11 as a special guest of the Chair of the Conference, Argentina's Minister of Foreign Affairs,, Susana Malcorra. However, it should be stressed that the members of the WTO have not reached a consensus on the role and regular participation of government-funded institutions in the organization's ministerial meetings. One of the reasons given by the members for this situation is the possible conflict of interests that could arise in the case of WTO member countries that are also members of some of those organizations. Be that as it may, during the event these entities can access the information that the WTO disseminates via its website or the news items published by the press organizations selected to participate in MC11.

### 3. How many Ministerial Conferences have been held?

Ten Ministerial Conferences have taken place so far. Two have been held in the Americas: the first in Seattle (1999) and the second in Cancun (2003).



- Nairobi, December 15-19, 2015
- Bali, Indonesia, December 3-6, 2013
- Geneva, Switzerland, December 15-17, 2011
- Geneva, Switzerland, November 30 - December 2, 2009
- Hong Kong, China, December 13-18, 2005
- Cancún, September 10-14, 2003
- Doha, Qatar, November 9-13, 2001
- Seattle, USA, November 30- December 3, 1999
- Geneva, Switzerland, May 18-20, 1998
- Singapore, Singapore, December 9-13, 1996

The most significant achievements of the last Ministerial Conference (Nairobi 2015) with regard to agriculture were:

- **The Nairobi Package:** name given to a series of six ministerial declarations on various regulatory and policy issues related to agricultural trade that were adopted in that city. They include the mandate to eliminate export subsidies for agricultural products; the mandate requiring developed countries to prohibit export subsidies for cotton and reform domestic support arrangements in their national cotton policies; the commitment to continue to work towards the establishment of a special safeguard mechanism for the developing countries; and the commitment to seek a permanent solution for programs for public stockholding for food security purposes, an issue that will be discussed further at next month's Ministerial Conference (WTO 2017a).
- Ratification by the developing countries of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), adopted during the Ministerial Conference held in Bali in 2013 and in effect since February of that year. This legal instrument contains binding provisions related to agriculture and sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and is expected to help simplify, modernize and harmonize import and export processes. As shown in **Table 1**, 21 IICA Member States that have ratified this agreement so far, with 12 countries having yet to do so.



**Table 1**  
**Countries in the Americas that have ratified the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement**

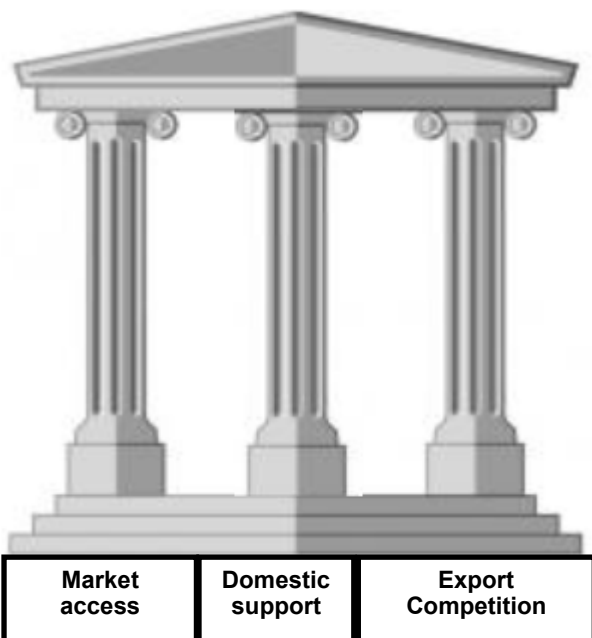
IICA member countries that have ratified the TFA	Date of ratification	Countries yet to ratify the TFA
Belize	September 2, 2015	Antigua & Barbuda
Brazil	March 29, 2016	Argentina
Canada	December 16, 2016	Barbados
Chile	November 21, 2016	Bolivia
Costa Rica	May 1, 2017	Colombia
Dominica	November 28, 2016	Ecuador
El Salvador	July 4, 2016	Guatemala
USA	January 23, 2015	Haiti
Grenada	December 8, 2015	Dom. Rep.
Guyana	November 30, 2015	Suriname
Honduras	July 14, 2016	Uruguay
Jamaica	January 19, 2016	Venezuela
Mexico	July 26, 2016	
Nicaragua	August 4, 2015	
Panama	November 17, 2015	
Paraguay	March 1, 2016	
Peru	July 27, 2016	
St Kitts & Nevis	July 17, 2016	
St Vincent & the Grenadines	January 9, 2017	
St Lucia	November 8, 2015	
Trinidad & Tobago	July 29, 2015	

Source: Prepared based on data culled from WTO 2017b.

## 4. What are some of the agricultural issues that will be discussed at the next Ministerial Conference?

The agricultural issues that will form part of the agenda of the Eleventh Ministerial Conference will be the three pillars of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, and two additional issues directly related to compliance with the obligations assumed under the agreement.

### Agreement on Agriculture



**4.1. Market access.** The first pillar, market access, will continue to be negotiated at the Eleventh Ministerial Conference, with a view to reaching agreement on more gradual reductions in the tariffs applied to agricultural products.

There are major disparities in the tariff lists of the members regarding tariff peaks and the range of tariff levels, and mixed tariffs and bound tariffs.

The expectation is that countries will reduce their tariffs and tariff peaks, and make a commitment to reviewing their bound tariffs, in order to reduce tariff escalations. The goal is to achieve this by applying a tariff reduction formula and reviewing the respective tariff quotas.

**4.2. Domestic support.** The second pillar, domestic support, will also be addressed in the negotiations at this Ministerial Conference. The intention is (WTO 2017c):

- That all production and trade-distorting domestic support be subject to greater scrutiny. All domestic support that distorts prices encourages over-supply and increases market volatility. Therefore, it is bad for farmers and global consumers, and heavily impacts developing countries.

- That the limits of domestic support that cause distortion not be set at artificially high levels; rather, that the massive entitlements seen today be meaningfully reduced.

- That the product-specific support provided by some countries (large agricultural producers and large agricultural exporters) be reduced significantly, with a view to its total elimination in the future, as it has an impact on prices worldwide and many of these products are vital to developing countries.

**4.3. Export subsidies.** The third pillar, export competition, was an issue on which progress was made at the last Ministerial Conference, as noted in section 2. However, it is felt that at the next meeting even more agreement could be achieved on trade-distorting practices — on export credits, for example.

**4.4. Special and differentiated treatment.** Special and differentiated treatment for the least developed countries will continue to form part of the agenda of these meetings, with a view to continuing to provide technical and financial cooperation to WTO members that warrant it.

**4.5. Compliance with notification obligations related to agriculture.** Under the terms of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, member countries are required to notify the organization periodically, as applicable, of the obligations they assume in relation to market access, specifically with regard to tariff quotas, the triggering of special safeguards, domestic support, export subsidies, export restrictions and the decision on measures concerning the possible negative effects of the reform program on least-developed and net food-importing developing countries (WTO 2017d). It is worth noting that the countries of the Americas do more to comply with these obligations than other parts of the world.

Compliance with this obligation is the only way that countries can demonstrate that they are acting in accordance with the rules and obligations of the Agreement on Agriculture. Furthermore, disseminating this information is a sign of transparency for other countries.

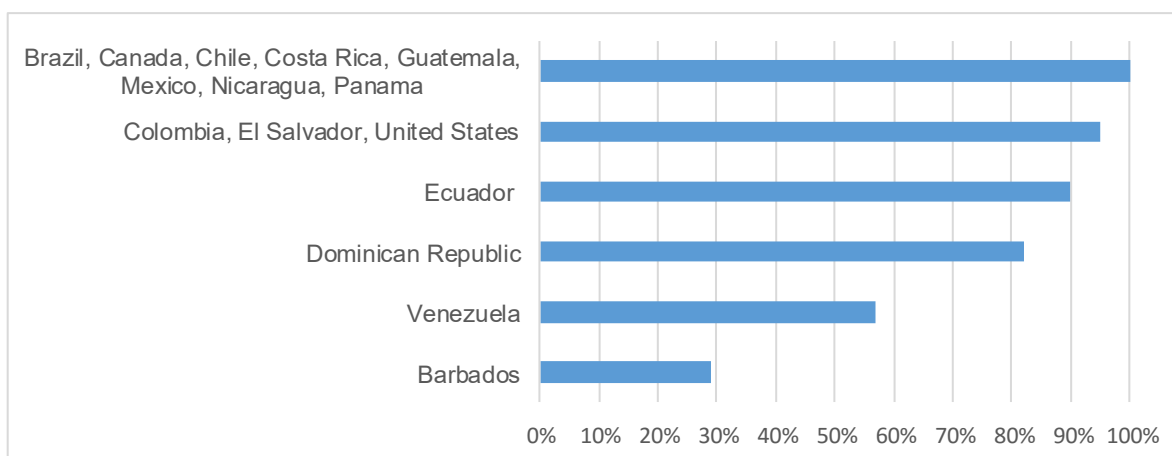
### **Status of the compliance of countries in the Americas with notification obligations related to agricultura**

An overview of the current status (as of May 2017) of IICA Member States' compliance with their notification obligations with the WTO is provided below.

With regard to the market access pillar of the Agreement on Agriculture, fifteen IICA member countries are required to notify the WTO of any application of tariff quotas. Thirteen of those fifteen are more than 80% compliant and relatively up to date with their notifications (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

#### **IICA member country compliance with notifications to the WTO regarding their use of tariff quotas**

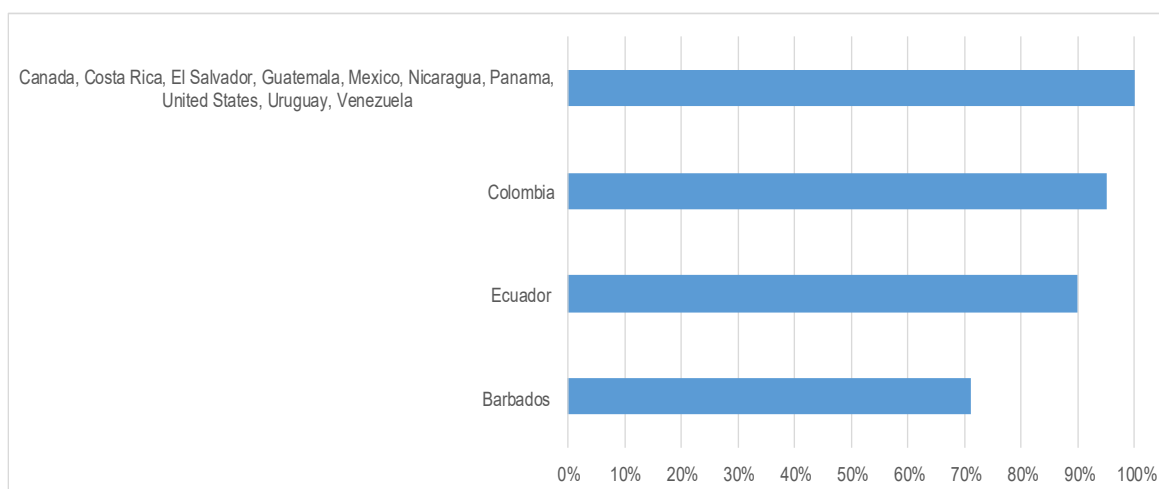


Source: Prepared based on data culled from WTO 2017d.

Also in connection with the market access pillar, thirteen IICA member countries are required to notify the WTO about the use of special safeguards. Twelve are more than 80% compliant (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

#### **IICA member country compliance with notifications to the WTO regarding their use of special safeguards**

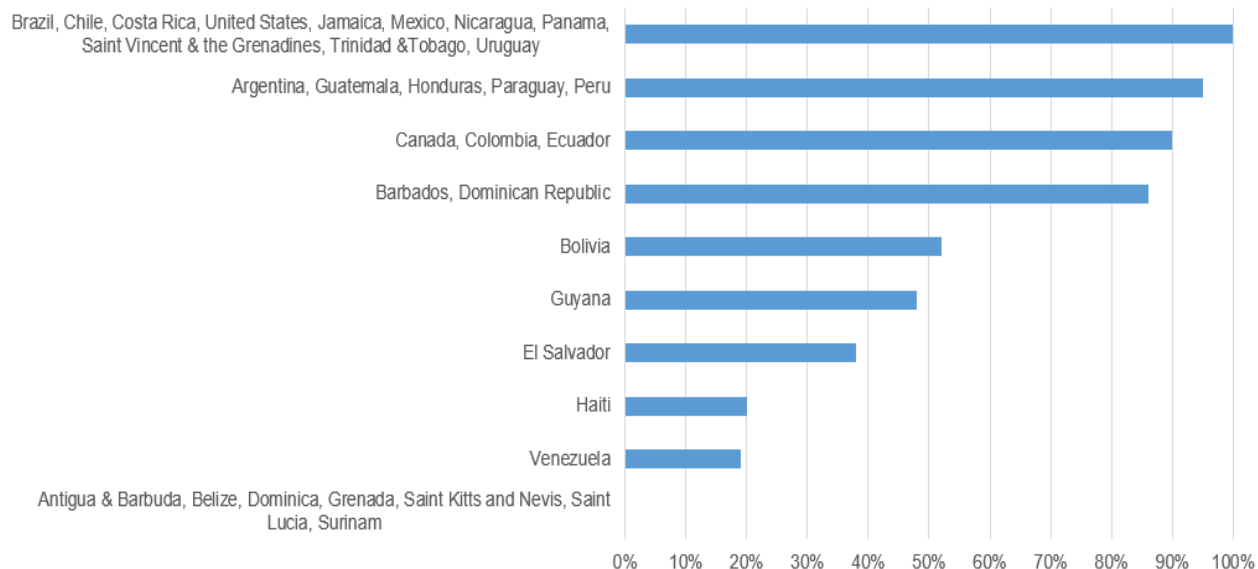


Source: Prepared based on data culled from WTO 2017d.



Notifications regarding domestic support will be one of the issues most discussed during the next Ministerial Conference, as quite a high percentage of countries have failed to submit the respective documents on time. **Figure 3** shows that 33 IICA member countries have obligations in this regard, 22 of which are more than 80% compliant, while the rate for the remainder is lower. Some countries in the Caribbean are the exception, as they have not submitted any notifications at all.

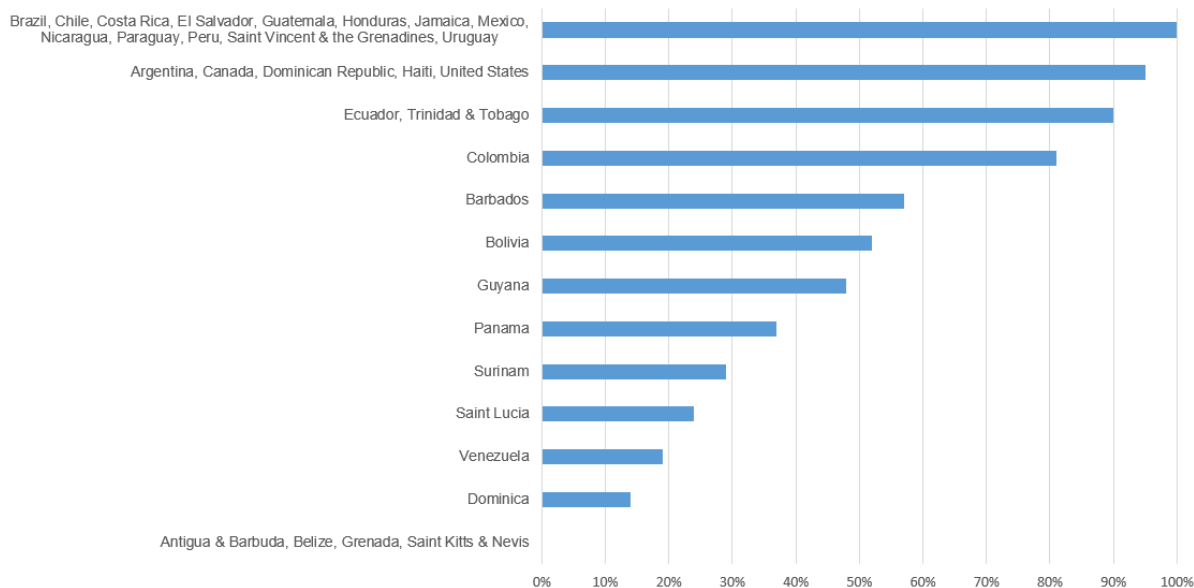
**Figure 3**  
IICA member country compliance with notifications to the WTO regarding their use of domestic support



Source: Prepared based on data culled from WTO 2017d.

With regard to export subsidies related to the reduction of budgetary outlays, 33 IICA member countries have an obligation to submit notifications to the WTO. **Figure 4** shows that the compliance of 21 countries is satisfactory (more than 80%), while the rate for the rest is somewhat lower.

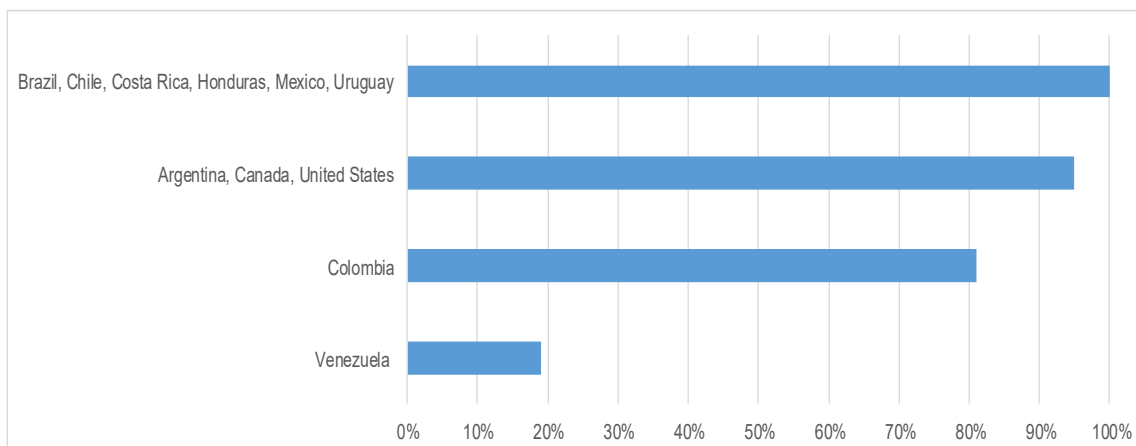
**Figure 4**  
IICA member country compliance with notifications to the WTO regarding the reduction of budgetary outlays for export subsidies



Source: Prepared based on data culled from WTO 2017d.

**Figure 5** shows that eleven countries in the Americas have an obligation to notify the WTO of their use of export subsidies related to total exports. Ten of them show a satisfactory level of compliance (more than 80%).

**Figure 5**  
**IICA member country compliance with notifications to the WTO regarding export subsidies related to total exports**



Source: Prepared based on data culled from WTO 2017d.

Finally, with regard to the notification of export subsidies related to the total volume of food aid, the only two countries in the Americas with notification obligations with the WTO are Canada and Brazil. They are, respectively, 95% and 100% compliant.

## 5. What are some of the sanitary and phytosanitary issues that will be discussed at the next Ministerial Conference?



It should be borne in mind that the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) is not open for negotiation, and never has been open for negotiation since it entered into force in 1995.

This situation can be interpreted as a vote of confidence by the WTO member countries in the agreement as such and how it safeguards the principles and rules of international trade relating to sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

Thus far, the WTO member countries have felt it more prudent to keep the WTO SPS Agreement as it is, rather than enter into a negotiating process that could incorporate elements that distort the scientific basis of the agreement. Nonetheless, although the SPS Agreement is not under negotiation, decisions related to sanitary and phytosanitary measures may be taken at a ministerial conference, as occurred in Doha in 2001 (**see Box 1**) with regard to the implementation of the Agreement.

Indeed, the Doha Conference marked a turning point, because measures were adopted to support member countries' promotion and implementation of the WTO's sanitary and phytosanitary standards without a prior process of negotiation.

Furthermore, five organizations agreed to implement technical and financial mechanisms designed to mobilize resources for enhancing developing countries' capacity to apply sanitary and phytosanitary standards, guidelines and recommendations. This led to the official establishment, in 2004, of the [Standards and Trade Development Facility \(STDF\)](#). Since then, this fund has become one of the best sources of financing for projects related to sanitary and phytosanitary measures that IICA and its member countries seek to implement.



In fact, IICA has supported, and in several instances taken part in, the implementation of eight projects costing a total of more than USD 4.5 million.

Since 2004, more than 60 donations have been approved for the implementation of projects and 52 donations for the design of projects, all of them aimed at helping the developing countries to overcome the sanitary and phytosanitary constraints that prevent them from accessing and maintaining a presence in markets. Over 50% of this support has been granted to least developed or low-income countries.

Some examples of the activities that the STDF has financed are:

- Good technical cooperation practices in the sanitary and phytosanitary sector.
- Instruments for evaluating sanitary and phytosanitary capabilities.
- Sanitary and phytosanitary risks and climate change.
- Indicators to gauge the results of projects on sanitary and phytosanitary issues.
- Use of economic analysis to justify sanitary and phytosanitary decisions.
- National and regional coordination mechanisms for sanitary and phytosanitary measures.
- Public-private partnerships to boost sanitary and phytosanitary capabilities.
- International trade and invasive exotic species.
- Points of convergence between sanitary and phytosanitary measures and trade facilitation.

For more information about the STDF, visit <http://www.standardsfacility.org/>

#### **BOX 1: DECISIONS TAKEN AT THE DOHA MINISTERIAL DE DOHA RELATING TO THE WTO SPS AGREEMENT**

**Longer time-frames for developing countries to comply with other countries' new SPS measures:** where a phased introduction is possible, the longer period for developing countries to comply is now understood to mean, normally, at least six months.

**A "reasonable interval" between publication of a country's new SPS measure and its entry into force:** now understood to mean, normally, at least six months, subject to certain conditions.

**Equivalence:** in the Doha decision, ministers instructed the SPS Committee to develop expeditiously the specific program to further the implementation of these equivalence provisions.

**Review of the SPS Agreement:** The Doha decision instructed the SPS Committee to review the operation of the agreements at least once every four years.

**Developing countries' participation in setting international SPS standards:** help developing-country members participate more effectively.

**Financial and technical assistance:** the decision calls for members to provide assistance to least-developed countries so that they can respond adequately to new SPS measures that could obstruct their trade. It also calls for assistance to help them implement the agreement as a whole.

Source: [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/dda\\_e/implem\\_explained\\_e.htm#sps](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dda_e/implem_explained_e.htm#sps)

## 6. What outcomes are expected at the Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires with regard to sanitary and phytosanitary issues?



While some members are interested in improving the implementation of the WTO SPS Agreement by incorporating trade facilitation issues, only modest progress should be expected as far as sanitary and phytosanitary matters are concerned.

The meeting in Buenos Aires has a challenging agenda and the chief focus will be global support for the multilateral trading system.

At any event, the possibility of discussing sanitary and phytosanitary issues and of decisions being reached will depend on several variables, such as: a) the speed with which the other issues on the agenda are negotiated; b) timing and the way in which the interested countries present the issues; c) the receptiveness of the international community; and d) the chair of the meeting and the WTO Director-General's handling of the matter.

The issue of maximum residues limits (MRLs) for pesticides, which is of crucial importance to the members, has been discussed at length by the WTO SPS Committee. Some countries feel that this justifies a debate and a decision within the WTO and at the Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires.

The impact of MRLs on consumer health, trade and plant health protection led the WTO Secretariat to organize a workshop on the issue, which took place in October 2016.

The activity brought together officials responsible for their respective country's participation in the WTO SPS Agreement and its application, and representatives of the pertinent international standard-setting organizations and scientific bodies. Specifically, the objectives of the workshop were to (WTO 2016):

- Study the WTO SPS Agreement and MRLs, including the pertinent provisions of the Agreement and jurisprudence on the subject.
- Examine the methods that Codex uses to establish MRLs. For this purpose, pertinent information was provided about the work of Codex and its scientific bodies, such as the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR) and the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR).
- Inform the participants of the pertinent work being carried out on pesticide residues at the international, regional and bilateral levels.
- Afford the participants an opportunity to share their experiences in complying with and establishing MRLs, as well as information about their national regulatory and legal structures.

A year later, the United States, Kenya and Uganda shared a follow-up document on the subject. In it, they put forward five proposals for improving the management of MRLs and a draft resolution for submission to, and adoption by, the Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires.

The five proposals are as follows (WTO 2017e:1-3):

1. Enable the JMPR to better respond to increased demand and monitor progress on new Codex MRLs.
2. Strengthen notification practices for greater transparency and predictability on MRLs.
3. Report to the Committee on international and regional activities on MRLs.
4. Collaborate on solutions for MRLs for minor use and specialty crops.
5. Discuss the role of the Committee in increasing coordination and harmonization.



The text of the proposed ministerial decision on MRLs for pesticides reads as follows:

We recognize the work undertaken by the SPS Committee to examine pesticide-related issues that have an adverse impact on international trade in food and agricultural products, and to achieve consensus on collaborative actions to reduce that impact on trade, particularly on the agricultural exports of developing countries. We affirm the central importance of risk analysis to assess, manage and communicate [risks of concern] [risks] associated with pesticide use in order to protect public health while enabling the safe use of pesticides and facilitating trade in food and agricultural products. We endorse the consensus reached in the SPS Committee on voluntary actions by Members to increase the capacity and efficiency of Codex in setting international standards on pesticide maximum residue levels (MRLs); to improve transparency and predictability in Members' setting of national MRLs; to achieve greater [harmonization] [alignment] across national and regional MRLs; and, to enable greater access to alternative pesticides and pesticides for minor-use crops, particularly in developing countries. We acknowledge the productive work of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) in building knowledge and capacity for developing countries in the area of pesticide MRLs. We encourage the SPS Committee to monitor the effectiveness of the voluntary actions and the STDF work in addressing trade concerns related to food and agricultural products and to consider further collaborative, consensus actions as appropriate. (WTO 2017d:5)



For it to be adopted, this proposal must clear two hurdles. First, it must be discussed and approved by the countries that attend the next meeting of the WTO SPS Committee, due to be held from November 2-3, 2017. Then, the countries that are proposing the resolution and those that support it could request its approval at the Ministerial Meeting in Buenos Aires.

If this is achieved, the work of the WTO SPS Committee will have to accommodate a new series of issues and expectations.

The countries should analyze the proposal in light of the positions they have adopted in working with the Codex Alimentarius and the discussions that have taken place within that body. For this reason, it is essential that the stakeholders of both organizations, the WTO and Codex, work together and coordinate their efforts closely.

Another issue that may be addressed at the Ministerial Meeting has to do with the need to reaffirm the science that underpins the standards governing trade and sanitary and phytosanitary measures. Were the countries to agree to limit their discretionary use of standards that have no scientific basis, it could have a significant, positive impact on international trade.

It is also worth mentioning that one of the big successes of the WTO SPS Committee has been the creation of tools to help the countries make a better fist of implementing the WTO SPS Agreement. Greater use of these tools could help the countries become more adept at applying concepts such as equivalence and regionalization, and even the discussion of trade differences, which would facilitate trade enormously.



Other entities that are doing a great job are the international standard-setting organizations involved in sanitary and phytosanitary measures (known as the three sisters) — the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and Codex Alimentarius. The progress that these organizations have achieved in the field of risk assessment, regionalization and equivalence could facilitate trade even further, provided that this progress is recognized, accepted or enshrined in standards by the members of the WTO SPS Committee.

The multilateral trading system is rule-based, which means that members must recognize the role played by the international standard-setting organizations identified in the WTO SPS Agreement. The work of the organizations involved in sanitary and phytosanitary measures must continue to be based on objective, transparent and well-established processes and procedures. The smooth operation of the multilateral trading system calls for collective investment in the generation of knowledge, data and resources designed to improve international procedures and establish, without delay, science-based sanitary and phytosanitary standards, guidelines and recommendations (WTO 2012).

The discussions that take place at the Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires could be very valuable, bearing in mind the difficulties experienced by the countries in complying with the deadlines for the WTO SPS Committee's review of the respective agreement every four years.

*For further information, please contact Adriana Campos Azofeifa, IICA trade specialist, by email ([adriana.campos@iica.int](mailto:adriana.campos@iica.int)) or phone ((506) 2216-0170); Nadia Monge Hernández, IICA technical officer for trade, by email ([nadia.monge@iica.int](mailto:nadia.monge@iica.int)) or phone ((506) 2216-0358); or Erick Bolaños, IICA agricultural health specialist, by email ([erick.bolanos@iica.int](mailto:erick.bolanos@iica.int)) or phone ((506) 2216-0418).*



## Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

Headquarters. P.O. Box 55-2200  
San Jose, Vazquez de Coronado, San Isidro  
11101 - Costa Rica  
Phone: (+506) 2216 0222 / Fax: (+506) 2216 0233  
e-mail: [iicahq@iica.int](mailto:iicahq@iica.int)



## List of References

- WTO (World Trade Organization, Switzerland). 2012. G/SPS/GEN/1143. SPS Measures and International Standards, Guidelines and Recommendations. Communication from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, New Zealand, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines and the United States of America (on line). Geneva, Switzerland. Consulted on Oct. 3, 2017. Available at <https://docs.wto.org/>
- WTO (World Trade Organization, Switzerland). 2016. Thematic SPS workshop on pesticide maximum residue levels (on line). Geneva, Switzerland. Consulted on Sept. 2, 2017. Available at [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/sps\\_e/wkshop\\_oct16\\_e/wkshop\\_oct16\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/sps_e/wkshop_oct16_e/wkshop_oct16_e.htm)
- WTO (World Trade Organization, Switzerland). 2017a. Nairobi Package (on line). Geneva, Switzerland. Consulted on August 27, 2017. Available at [https://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/minist\\_e/mc10\\_e/nairobipackage\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/mc10_e/nairobipackage_e.htm)
- WTO (World Trade Organization, Switzerland). 2017b. Members accepting the Protocol of Amendment to insert the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement into Annex 1A of the WTO Agreement (on line). Geneva, Switzerland. Consulted on August 29, 2017. Available at [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/tradfa\\_e/tradfa\\_agreeacc\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tradfa_e/tradfa_agreeacc_e.htm)
- WTO (World Trade Organization, Switzerland). 2017c. The Cairns Group's Objectives for the Eleventh Ministerial Conference and Beyond. Document JOB/AG/91 (on line). Geneva, Switzerland. Consulted on Oct. 4, 2017. Available at <https://docs.wto.org/>
- WTO (World Trade Organization, Switzerland). 2017d. Compliance with notification obligations. Document G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.28 (on line). Geneva, Switzerland. Consulted on August 31, 2017. Available at <https://goo.gl/5LQcDo>
- WTO (World Trade Organization, Switzerland). 2017e. G/SPS/W/292/Rev.2. Workshop on pesticide maximum residue levels (MRLS): recommendations for endorsement by the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (on line). Geneva, Switzerland. Consulted on Oct. 30, 2017. Available at <https://docs.wto.org/>
- STDF (Standards and Trade Development Facility). 2017. Presentation (on line). Geneva, Switzerland. Consulted on Oct. 15, 2017. Available at <http://www.standardsfacility.org/>
- 



## Technical Documents on Agricultural Trade Policy and Technical Bulletins on the Committee of Agriculture of the WTO

### 2017

- Eighty-Fifth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization. December, 2017.
- The agricultural and sanitary and phytosanitary issues that will be discussed at the Eleventh Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization. November, 2017.
- Rules of origin in the agrifood trade. September, 2017.
- Eighty-Fourth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization. July, 2017.
- Eighty-Third Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization. May, 2017.

### 2016

- Eighty-Second Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization. November, 2016.
- Eighty-First Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization. September, 2016.
- Eighty Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization. June, 2016.
- Seventy-ninth Meeting of the Agriculture Committee of the World Trade Organization. March, 2016.

### 2015

- Seventy-eighth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization. September, 2015.
- Seventy-seventh Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization. September. June, 2015.
- Seventy-sixth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization. March, 2015.

### 2014

- Seventy-fourth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization. June, 2014.
- Seventy-third Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization. March, 2014.
- Guidelines for Dispute Settlement in the WTO. June, 2014.
- Relations between IICA and the WTO. February, 2014.
- Main Topics Addressed at the January 2014 Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization.



## 2013

- The intersection of the agriculture and trade in the WTO . December, 2013.
- The WTO Conference in Bali potential agriculture- related topics for discussion. November 2013.
- On-line course for IICA member countries “Agriculture and the WTO. November, 2013.
- Topics discussed at the 71st Regular Meeting of the WTO Committee on Agriculture and at the 2013 Public Forum. October, 2013.
- Annual report: june 2012 - june 2013. . July, 2013.
- Procedure for Meetings of the WTO Committee on Agriculture and Main Topics Addressed at the June 2013 Meeting. July, 2013.
- Matters addressed at the Sixty-ninth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization (WTO). June, 2013.
- WTO-IICA Reference Centre Twenty most frequently asked questions. April, 2013.
- Trade agreements in the Americas in 2012. January, 2013.

## 2012

- Matters addressed at the Sixty-eighth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization (WTO). December, 2012.
- The WTO-IICA Reference Center begins to deliver results. December, 2012.
- Training courses offered by the World Trade Organization (WTO). November, 2012. I
- Issues discussed at the Sixty-seventh Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization (WTO). November, 2012.
- Information available from the WTO Regional Reference Centre at IICA. September, 2012.
- The reference centres of the World Trade Organization (WTO). September, 2012.
- Relations between IICA and the WTO. June, 2012.
- Issues discussed at the Sixty-sixth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization (WTO). June, 2012.
- Basic glossary of terms commonly used in the World Trade Organization (WTO). February, 2012.



Competitiveness  
and sustainability of  
**agricultural chains**  
for food security and  
economic development





**World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference**  
**Buenos Aires, Argentina**  
**December 10-13, 2017**



**Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture**

Headquarters. P.O. Box 55-2200  
San Jose, Vazquez de Coronado, San Isidro  
11101 - Costa Rica  
Phone: (+506) 2216 0222 / Fax: (+506) 2216 0233  
e-mail: [iicahq@iica.int](mailto:iicahq@iica.int)



Our  
Commitment:  
Results

