



Eighty-first Ordinary Session of the WTO Committee on Agriculture

The purpose of this document¹ is to share the main topics discussed during the Eighty-first Ordinary Session of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization (WTO)², which the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) attended as an observer, in support of its member countries.

The goal of this document is to provide information on the compliance status of countries in the Americas regarding agricultural notifications (as of September 2016), and at the same time, recapitulate the inputs that resulted from an information workshop held before the meeting, intended to increase transparency in countries of the Committee on Agriculture.

1. Issues discussed during the Eighty-first Ordinary Session of the WTO Committee on Agriculture held in September 2016

The meeting included review and discussion of the following notifications sent by member countries of the WTO to the Committee on Agriculture Secretariat:

1.1. Notifications on agriculture discussed during the September 2016 meeting:

Two Member States of IICA (Canada and the United States) raised questions to Brazil, Costa Rica and Turkey about issues associated with domestic support³ and to India and Moldavia about market access. On the other hand, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica and the United States responded to specific inquiries made by other members of the WTO (table 1). Additional countries that are not member states of IICA also inquired about these issues, as detailed in the following table.

¹Drafted by the flagship project entitled "Competitiveness and sustainability of agricultural chains for food security and economic development" at IICA.

²Held in September 14-15 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland.

³In the context of the Agreement on Agriculture of the WTO, all domestic support in favor of farmers is subject to regulations. There are therefore two basic categories of domestic support: one with little or no impact on trade (called Amber Box measures). In WTO terminology, these subsidies are usually identified by "boxes" that have been color-coded, imitating traffic lights: green (allowed), amber (stop-must be reduced), red (forbidden).

Table1. Issues consulted regarding the application of agricultural commitments.

Consulting countries	Consulted country	Issue of consult
India	Australia	Biosafety Act of 2015
United States	Brazil	Domestic Support Programs
Australia, United States , India, New Zealand	Canada	New type of dairy ingredients
Australia, United States , New Zealand, European Union	Canada	Country policy for wine sales
India	Canada	Framework for Canada's "Growing Forward" policy
India	Canada	Country's support to the ornamental horticulture industry
New Zealand	Canada	Country's cheese composition standards
United States , New Zealand	Canada	Country's notification on State commercial enterprises related to dairy products
Norway, New Zealand, Switzerland	Canada	Tariff concessions ⁴ of the country in regards to cheese
United States	Costa Rica	Country's compliance with commitments associated with the domestic support global measure
Australia, India, New Zealand	European Union	European Union Agricultural Policies
Australia, European Union	India	Country's sugar export subsidies
New Zealand	India	Apple imports
United States	India	Country's Export Assistance Program
United States	Moldavia	Country's tariffs on poultry
European Union	Pakistan	Increase of duties applied by the country on powdered milk and powdered whey imports.
European Union	Pakistan	Country's subsidy on sugar exports.
Australia, New Zealand	Sri Lanka	Tariff increase applied by country on powdered milk
Thailand	Tanzania	Country's restrictions on sugar imports
New Zealand	Turkey	Country's subsidies to encourage consumption of locally-produced dairy products
Canada	Turkey	Country's domestic support policies
India	United States	Country's World Food Security Act
India	United States	Country's new program for cost distribution of ginned cotton
India	United States	Loss coverage program concerning prices and agricultural risk coverage program
India	United States	Tariff concession increases applied by country on sugar

⁴ A concession is a potential limitation to exports or imports of goods, which is applied to a certain amount of said goods or during a specific period of time. A tariff concession is applied during a certain period of time and to a maximum volume of product, in which case exports or imports are exempt from paying customs tariffs or applied a preferential tariff.

Table1 (cont). Issues consulted regarding the application of agricultural commitments.

Consulting countries	Consulted country	Issue of consult
Australia	United States	Country's purchases of cheese stocks
European Union	Vietnam	Tax increases applied by country on consumption of wine and spirits
European Union	Zambia	Public corn stocks and exports
Australia	China	Environmental programs
Australia	China	Country's regional assistance programs
European Union	Thailand	Country's rice exports from public stocks
United States	Turkey	Destination for country's wheat flour sales

Source: Meeting of the WTO Committee on Agriculture in September 2016.

During the meeting, several issues were discussed including notifications presented by some member countries. Five member states of IICA from the Americas (Canada, Colombia, United States, Guatemala and Honduras) addressed issues including tariff concessions, domestic support, and export subsidies (table 2).

Table 2. Issues addressed regarding agricultural notifications.

Consulted country	Issue addressed
Canada, Guatemala, Korea, Tunisia	Notifications concerning imports, within the framework of commitments on tariff concessions and others.
Korea, Chinese Taipei	Notifications on special safeguards ⁵
Canada, Colombia, European Union, Honduras, Israel, Tunisia, United States, Vietnam	Notifications on domestic support commitments
Israel	Notifications on the introduction or modification of domestic support measures
Australia and Canada	Notifications on export subsidy commitments
Russia	Notifications on the decision made by the Net Food-Importing Developing Countries (NFIDCs)

Source: Meeting of the WTO Committee on Agriculture in September 2016.

The meeting also included postponed responses to questions made by Kazakhstan regarding notifications on tariff concessions management, other questions from China concerning notifications on import tariff concessions and questions from China, Fiji and Tunisia on domestic support commitments.

Finally, a series of notifications that were not sent to the WTO Secretariat were not the subject of any inquiry during the meeting (table 3). These notifications may nevertheless be reviewed in future meetings. On this occasion, five Member States of IICA (Canada,

⁵Safeguards are exceptional protection measures applied by a country to temporarily protect certain local industries against serious threats caused by a significant increase in the goods flowing in the domestic market under unfair competition conditions.

Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico and Paraguay) submitted notifications and received no request for clarification from other countries.

Table 3. Agricultural notifications submitted that were not the subject of further inquiries

Notifying country	Topic of notification
European Union, Korea and Russia	Notifications on the management of commitments concerning tariff concessions and others
Canada , European Union, Mexico , New Zealand, Norway and South Africa	Notifications on tariff concession imports and others
Chinese Taipei and Mexico	Notifications within the framework of special safeguards
Afghanistan, Cameroon, China, Mexico , New Zealand, Paraguay and Vanuatu	Notifications within the framework of domestic support
Afghanistan, Cameroon, El Salvador , China, Paraguay , Vietnam, Zambia, Ukraine, Colombia , Indonesia, México , New Zealand, South Africa and Switzerland	Notifications within the framework of commitments regarding export subsidies.

Source: Meeting of the WTO Committee on Agriculture in September 2016.

2. Main results of the workshop held on September 13, 2016

The WTO Secretariat called upon all its members and organizations participating as observers, to participate in an open session, the purpose of which was: a) to exchange opinions on the vision behind the compliance of obligations as established by the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture and b) share the information sources of the WTO and the new agricultural management system.

The reasons for which member countries of the WTO are in arrears in the payment of their agricultural obligations include:

- Insufficient experience to prepare notifications
- Lack of technical knowledge
- Lack of availability of institutional staff, equipped to prepare these notifications.
- Difficulty in collecting the data needed for notifications.
- Complexity of the format used for notifications
- Lack of coordination with other bodies associated with this topic.
- High staff rotation, which prevents countries from complying with notifications in a timely manner.
- Lack of awareness of the mandatory nature of notifications.

Finally, the WTO Secretariat commended countries who had complied with their agricultural notifications in a timely manner, including six countries in Latin America that are member states of IICA: Brazil, Costa Rica, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico and Uruguay.

3. Institutional contact points

For more information, please contact Adriana Campos Azofeifa, trade specialist at IICA, at adriana.campos@iica.int or telephone (506) 2216-0170. You may also contact Nadia Monge Hernández, trade technical expert at IICA, at nadia.monge@iica.int or telephone (506) 2216-0358.