



Ninetieth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization





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This document¹ outlines the main points discussed during the Ninetieth Regular Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization (WTO)², which the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) attended in an observer capacity.

In these meetings, the Committee on Agriculture monitors the extent to which WTO Member States are complying with commitments made under the Agreement on Agriculture. The delegates review and discuss the trade measures about which the WTO has been notified under the agreement, as well any issues within the purview of the Committee, such as compliance with agricultural notifications.

1. Matters addressed during the meeting

The purpose of this document is to outline some of the more relevant points for IICA and WTO member countries in terms of notifications about trade measures related to market access³, export competition⁴ and domestic support⁵, among other aspects specified in the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, such as compliance by countries with notification requirements and follow-up on agriculture-related ministerial decisions made at the Ministerial Conferences in Bali (2013) and in Nairobi (2015).

1.1. Agricultural Notifications

The Chairperson stressed that in 2018 there was **an 18% decline in the number of outstanding responses**, in comparison to the 2012-2017 period, and therefore encouraged members to continue efforts in this regard. She also invited them to provide their responses by including them in the online system, sending them to the Secretariat or by raising them during the Committee meeting, under the relevant agenda item.

With respect to the **outstanding notifications**, she informed members that since the November 2018 meeting, the Committee had received 82 notifications, which had been distributed electronically to all the delegations. She also recognized Members' efforts to bring their notifications up to date, since some countries had recently submitted notifications that covered multiple years. For example, China and Turkey had submitted domestic support notifications, the former, covering the 2011 to 2016 period and the latter, the 2006 to 2009 period. Japan submitted food aid notifications, covering the years 2013 to 2016.

¹ Prepared by IICA's International Trade and Regional Integration Program, July 2019.

² Held on 26 and 27 February 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland.

³ In the Agreement on Agriculture, **market access** refers to the "tariffication" of all barriers to agricultural trade. In other words, on entering the market, tariffs, tariff quotas and special safeguards will be applied to these products.

⁴ **Export subsidies (or export competition)** provide more favorable conditions for export actions, for example, direct payments, credit, logistics facilities, as well as taxes and lower costs for export services, among other measures. With the Agreement on Agriculture, countries commit to reducing volume of subsidized exports and the amount of money spent to subsidize exports. The Agreement also examines matters related to circumvention measures.

⁵ Under the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, all **domestic support** for agricultural producers is subject to rules. There are basically two categories of domestic support: support that does not distort trade or does so minimally (so-called Green Box measures) and trade-distorting support (so-called Amber Box measures). In WTO terminology, subsidies in general are identified by "boxes", which are given the color of traffic lights: green (allowed), amber (slow down, in other words, they need to be reduced), red (forbidden).

However, the Chairperson indicated that despite these important efforts, much remained to be done in the area of transparency, given that the following notifications were outstanding for the 1995 to 2016 period:

- 36 % (798) Table DS:1 domestic support notifications; and
- 34 % (838) export subsidy notifications in the Table ES:1 series.

As far as notifications that were made on the date of the Committee meeting were concerned, Canada and the United States, which are both IICA Member States, posed questions on notified measures regarding export subsidies, domestic support and market access. On the other hand, these countries and Mexico responded to specific questions posed to them by other WTO members (Table 1).

As seen in Table 1, there were products discussed that are of interest to the countries of the Americas, such as soymeal, dairy products, poultry, pulses, wheat, cotton, tobacco and wine. Questions about these products were posed by the United States, Canada and Mexico. However, other countries, such as Guatemala, Paraguay and Costa Rica, expressed an interest in the question posed to India about sugar policies, given that they could be affected by market distortions.

Table 1. Issues raised regarding the implementation of agricultural commitments

Countries posing the question	Country to which the question was posed	Issue concerned
United States	India	Import duty protections
United States	India	Soymeal export subsidies
Canada	Mexico	Mexico's Strategic Program of Guaranteed Prices
Australia, India, European Union	United States	U.S. trade promotion payments
India	United States	The U.S. Boston Bounty Bucks Funds Program
United States, New Zealand	Canada	New milk ingredient class
United States	Canada	Canada's wine sale policy
Canada, New Zealand	European Union	Modification of the agricultural schedule of commitments
United States	Ghana	Poultry imports
Australia, Canada , United States , Russia, Ukraine	India	Pulses policies
United States	Pakistan	Wheat export subsidies
Australia	United States	Proposed domestic support measures
India	United States	Support to the cotton sector
United States	Zimbabwe	Tobacco export incentives
Australia	India	Sugar policies

Source: Ninetieth Regular Meeting of the WTO Committee on Agriculture, February 2019

During the meeting, several members were also asked specific questions about tariff quota, domestic support and export subsidy measures. In this instance, Brazil was the only country in the Americas to which the European Union posed a question about its notifications regarding non-product specific domestic support (Table 2). Questions focused on the amount and types of subsidies for marketing credits, as well as specific eligibility criteria and benefits provided by these loans.

Table 2. Specific issues regarding agricultural notifications to countries in the Americas

Countries to which the question was posed	Subject of the notification
Brazil, Australia, China, Chinese Taipei, Israel, Malaysia, Norway, Turkey	Notifications related to domestic support commitments
Chinese Taipei	Notifications related to the issue of special safeguards
China	Notifications related to new or modified domestic support measures that are exempt from reduction
Israel, Japan	Notifications related to export subsidy commitments
Australia	Notifications related to the decision about net food-importing developing countries.

Source: Ninetieth Regular Meeting of the WTO Committee on Agriculture, February 2019.

Additionally, there were a series of notifications that were sent to the WTO Secretariat, in respect of which no questions were raised (Table 3). However, this does not exclude the possibility of these notifications being subject to review in subsequent meetings. In this instance, four IICA Member States (Brazil, Canada, the United States and Mexico) submitted notifications and received no request for clarification from the other countries.

Table 3. Agricultural notifications that were submitted, and in respect of which no questions were raised

Countries submitting notifications	Subject of the notification
Brazil	Notifications related to imports under tariff and other quota commitments
	Notifications related to export subsidy commitments
Canada	Notifications about the issue of special safeguards
	Notifications related to export subsidy commitments
United States	Notifications related to imports under tariff and other quota commitments
Mexico	Notifications related to imports under tariff and other quota commitments
	Notifications related to the issue of special safeguards

Source: Ninetieth Regular Meeting of the WTO Committee on Agriculture, February 2019.

1.2. Other matters

1.2.1. Parallel activities: The members and the Secretariat carried out two activities. The first was a presentation by the European Union and the United States about their policies. Moreover, the Secretariat also delivered a presentation on [The Agricultural Market Information System \(AMIS\)](#) and held a discussion on food markets.

1.2.2. Implementing the results of the Ministerial Conference:

1.2.2.1. Review of the *Bali Ministerial Decision on the Administration of Tariff Quotas*. The Chairperson indicated that the members had had an informal meeting, where they discussed the preliminary report on the review prepared by the Secretariat. Among the elements that were identified were issues related to improving tariff rate quota transparency, including harmonization of members' notification practices; reallocation requirements; issues related to special and differential treatment; and the practical applicability of the underfill mechanism. Members were of the opinion that the Committee should finalize the report and recommendations by June 2019.

1.2.2.2. Follow-up on the *Nairobi Decision on Export Competition*, including preparation for the June 2019 Export Competition Dedicated Discussion. The Chairperson remarked that in June 2018, the Committee had concluded its third dedicated discussion on export competition since the Nairobi Decision.

In relation to this matter, the United States posed questions to India about export subsidies and credit; to Thailand about export credits; and to Turkey about food aid.

With respect to export subsidy commitments, the revised draft schedules of eight⁶ of the members had been fully certified, pursuant to the Nairobi Decision on Export Competition, whereas, for the European Union and Canada, the process was underway but not completed. Other countries, such as Brazil, Indonesia, Iceland and Turkey, were preparing to submit their schedules. Brazil indicated that its Government had not provided export subsidies for several years.

Finally, the Chairperson urged all the members (even those with no export subsidy commitments) to complete the questionnaire for the dedicated discussion on export competition, which was to be held in June 2019.

2. Contact persons at the Institute

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⁶ Australia, Noruega, Israel, Suiza, Colombia, Uruguay, Estados Unidos y Sudáfrica son los países miembros que ya certificaron sus listas de competencia de exportaciones, de conformidad con la Decisión Ministerial de Bali.