



## REPORT (2019) ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

### REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON

1.1. The present draft report is being circulated by the Chairperson of the Committee on Agriculture on her own responsibility. This report provides a summary of the activities of the Committee on Agriculture ("the Committee") during 2019.

1.2. The Committee held three formal meetings in 2019 on 26-27 February, 25-26 June, and 30-31 October.<sup>1</sup> Informal meetings were held on 25 February, 24 June and 29 October. Ms. Débora Cumes of Guatemala was the Chairperson for the February meeting of the Committee. The Committee elected Ms. Christiane Daleiden Distefano of Luxemburg as the new Chairperson for 2019-2020 beginning with the June meeting.

1.3. In accordance with Article 18.1 of the Agreement on Agriculture ("the Agreement") at each of its meetings the Committee reviewed progress in the implementation of Members' commitments. This review process is undertaken on the basis of notifications submitted by Members in the areas of market access, domestic support, export competition, export prohibitions and restrictions as well as under the follow-up to the Marrakesh Ministerial Decision on NFIDCs. Between 1 January and 29 October 2019, 390 agriculture notifications of all types were circulated.

1.4. In 2019, Members posed 241 questions on 140 notifications during the Committee's review process. These questions were distributed as follows: 70% related to domestic support issues, 22% to market access, and 8% to export competition.<sup>2</sup> Specific concerns were also raised regarding the outstanding notifications that some Members had yet to submit to the Committee.

1.5. The Committee in 2019 received two counter-notifications from Members pursuant to Article 18.7 of the Agreement. The joint communication from Australia, Canada and the United States presented calculations and findings in respect of certain measures by India providing market price support to pulses whereas Indonesia's submission dealt with the trigger price of instant coffee and extracts of coffee notified by the Philippines in G/AG/N/PHL/27 and G/AG/N/PHL/53 for the purposes of invocation of SSG.<sup>3</sup>

1.6. Members also raised a wide range of matters relevant to the implementation of commitments independently of notifications under the provisions of Article 18.6 of the Agreement. A total of 98 specific implementation matters (SIMs) were raised by 12 Members during 2019. Out of these, 58 SIMs were discussed for the first time in 2019. The remaining matters were discussed on one or more occasions in previous years; two of these SIMs have been brought up in 14 CoA meetings.

1.7. In response to the observed steady increase over the last years in the number of outstanding responses to questions raised during the Review, at the request of the chairperson, the Secretariat circulates before each Committee meeting a list of outstanding responses under the CoA review process.<sup>4</sup> Since the beginning of this monitoring exercise in 2018, there has been a reduction of 23% in outstanding responses for questions raised from 2012-2017. The chair welcomed this

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<sup>1</sup> The summary reports of these meetings are contained in documents G/AG/R/91, G/AG/R/92, and G/AG/R/93 (to be issued).

<sup>2</sup> See G/AG/W/194, G/AG/W/199, and G/AG/W/202.

<sup>3</sup> G/AG/W/193 and G/AG/W/200.

<sup>4</sup> G/AG/W/177, G/AG/W/177/Rev.1 and G/AG/W/195 series.

improved transparency and encouraged Members to submit their outstanding responses at their earliest convenience.

1.8. At each meeting the Committee reviewed the status of Members' compliance with their notification obligations under the Agreement. A document summarizing the status of compliance with notification requirements was circulated at each Committee meeting.<sup>5</sup> While a significant proportion of notifications are still outstanding (about 25% of all notifications from 1995-2017), Members continue to make efforts to bring their notification record up to date; 2019 will become the year with the highest number of notifications submitted in a year (371 notifications as of 22 October 2019).

1.9. With respect to the work of the Committee related specifically to NFIDCs, the WTO list of NFIDCs<sup>6</sup> remained unchanged. The Committee undertook the annual monitoring of the follow-up to the Ministerial Decision on Measures Concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least developed and Net Food-Importing Developing Countries (NFIDC) at the October 2019 meeting. The Secretariat circulated a background note<sup>7</sup> to facilitate the annual NF discussions. The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the International Grains Council (IGC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) also contributed to the NF monitoring.<sup>8</sup> Within the Committee's monitoring of the follow-up to the NFIDC Decision, Members continued to reflect on the review of the provisions on international food aid contained in the Nairobi Decision on Export Competition as mandated in its paragraph 32.<sup>9</sup>

1.10. At the October 2019 CoA meeting, the Committee undertook the consultations with respect to Members' participation in the normal growth of world trade. The exercise, conducted annually pursuant to Article 18.5 of the Agreement on Agriculture, was supported by a background note<sup>10</sup> by the Secretariat.

1.11. The Committee maintained a standing item on its agenda relating to implementation issues, both in the framework of its follow-up to the Decision by the Doha Ministerial Conference on Implementation-Related Issues and Concerns<sup>11</sup>, as well as in the framework of issues and proposals referred to it by the General Council. No Member commented under this agenda item in 2019 meetings.

1.12. The Committee also discussed follow-up to the Ministerial outcomes, specifically related to (i) the Understanding on Tariff Rate Quota Administration Provisions of Agricultural Products, as defined in Article 2 of the Agreement on Agriculture; and (ii) the Nairobi Ministerial Decision on Export Competition. No information was provided by Members in the context of the monitoring foreseen under the Bali Decision on Public Stockholding for Food Security purposes.

1.13. Review of the Bali Decision on TRQ administration is called for in that Decision.<sup>12</sup> The objective of the review is to promote a continuing process of improvement in the utilization of tariff rate quotas and the General Council shall take decisions on the recommendations arising from the review, including on the future operation of paragraph 4 of the underfill mechanism, no later than 31 December 2019. The review continued in 2019 primarily through open-ended informal meetings of the Committee and was agreed to be concluded in June 2019 as per the agreed process and timelines.<sup>13</sup> The deadline was later extended to the October 2019 meeting of the Committee.<sup>14</sup> Written submission on behalf of the Cairns Group<sup>15</sup> and the EU<sup>16</sup> were circulated in 2019 to assist

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<sup>5</sup> G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.30, G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.31, G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.32 and G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.33.

<sup>6</sup> G/AG/5/Rev.10.

<sup>7</sup> G/AG/W/42/Rev.20.

<sup>8</sup> G/AG/GEN/154, G/AG/GEN/155 and G/AG/GEN/156.

<sup>9</sup> WT/MIN(15)/45, para. 32.

<sup>10</sup> G/AG/W/32/Rev.18.

<sup>11</sup> WT/MIN(01)/17, para. 2.

<sup>12</sup> WT/MIN(13)/39, para. 13.

<sup>13</sup> G/AG/W/171.

<sup>14</sup> G/AG/R/92, para. 3.27.

<sup>15</sup> G/AG/W/197.

<sup>16</sup> G/AG/W/175/Add.1.

the review discussions. At the October 2019 meeting, the Committee adopted the report<sup>17</sup> of the review and the associated recommendations for transmission to the General Council for a decision.

1.14. The follow-up to the Nairobi Ministerial Decision on Export Competition covered three main items: the annual dedicated discussion, Members' update on their efforts to modify export subsidy schedules and the first triennial Review of the Nairobi Decision. The dedicated discussion on export competition occurred during the June 2019 meeting. The discussions were held on the basis of the Secretariat's background document. Following the meeting, a revised background document compiling all the information received by the Secretariat was circulated on 18 September 2019<sup>18</sup> concluding this examination process. During the Committee, Members exchanged questions and responses on specific measures in relation to the implementation of the Nairobi Decision.<sup>19</sup> The Cairns Group circulated a paper as an input to the dedicated discussion.<sup>20</sup> The paper considered the alignment of Members' reported policies with the Nairobi Decision.

1.15. At each Committee meeting in 2019 Members provided information regarding their efforts to advance on the modification of their scheduled export subsidy commitments pursuant to the Nairobi Decision. The situation on 30 October 2019 was as follows: out of the 16 Members with export subsidy reduction commitments at the time of the Decision, 11 Members had their schedule revised pursuant to the Nairobi Decision certified and two other Members had submitted their revised draft schedule in 2017 where the certification has been pending; three Members reported on steps taken to implement the Decision.

1.16. The Committee discussed enhancing transparency and the CoA Review process in three informal meetings in 2019. The Committee meeting discussed possible enhancements to the AG-IMS, the system that contains information on all agriculture notifications, as well as all questions and responses provided by Members during the CoA Review process. The Committee also continued discussions aimed at improving Members' notification compliance.

1.17. Several database tools support the Committee's monitoring and transparency functions. Since 2012, the AG-IMS platform has facilitated Member submission of questions and responses in the context of the Committee's monitoring of implementation of commitments. At the October 2019 CoA meeting, the Secretariat launched the on-line agriculture notification system<sup>21</sup> for use by all Members. The Secretariat also informed Members about the ongoing work on improvements to the AG-IMS Q&A system based on Members suggestions.

1.18. The WTO's Agriculture and Commodities Division delivered the tenth Geneva-based workshop on agriculture notifications from 30 April to 3 May. It was organized in collaboration with the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation with the purpose of facilitating the preparation and review of agriculture notifications. A total of 30 capital-based participants from developing countries were funded by the WTO. The workshop included practical exercises related to the review process of the Committee on Agriculture and hands-on training on the Agriculture Information Management System (AG-IMS). Participants were able to practice the preparation of notifications using the test site of the online notification system. As in previous activities, the last day of the 2019 workshop was devoted to individual sessions with AGCD staff, offering participants the opportunity to consult on unfulfilled notification obligations.

1.19. Additionally, there were nine more technical assistance activities carried out in 2019 covering the Agreement on Agriculture, including three regional seminars for Anglophone Africa, Asia and Pacific Region, and Latin America; and six national workshops carried out in Benin, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mexico, Mongolia, Tonga, and Uzbekistan.<sup>22</sup> Two of these workshops focused specifically on Agriculture notifications. The Chair reminded Members that they could approach the Secretariat for technical assistance, including to request national activities in their capital, to improve their notification performance.

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<sup>17</sup> G/AG/29.

<sup>18</sup> G/AG/W/125/Rev.11, G/AG/W/125/Rev.11/Add.1 - G/AG/W/125/Rev.11/Add.4 and G/AG/W/125/Rev.11/Add.2/Corr.1.

<sup>19</sup> G/AG/W/198.

<sup>20</sup> G/AG/W/201 and G/AG/W/201/Corr.1.

<sup>21</sup> <http://agims.wto.org/>.

<sup>22</sup> As of 30 October 2019.

1.20. The following international intergovernmental organizations have regular observer status in the Committee: Food and Agriculture Organization, International Monetary Fund, the International Grains Council, OECD, UNCTAD, World Food Programme, and the World Bank. The renewal of *ad hoc* observer status for the Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Cooperation (IICA) for 2020 was agreed by the Committee at its October 2019 meeting.

1.21. At the October 2019 CoA meeting, the Chairperson announced the dates of the meetings of the Committee on Agriculture in 2020.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> G/AG/GEN/157.