



REPORT (2022) ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON

1.1. The present report is being circulated by the Chairperson of the Committee on Agriculture on his own responsibility. This report provides a summary of the activities of the Committee on Agriculture ("the Committee") during 2022.

1.2. The Committee organized four formal meetings in 2022 on 15-16 March, 27-28 June, and 14-15 September and 21-22 November¹. Eight informal meetings of the Committee were held respectively on 2 February, 18 February, 15 March, 27 June, 14 September, 11 October, 27 October, and 21 November. Mr. Marcos da Rosa Uranga of Uruguay chaired the Committee's March meeting. In June 2022, the Committee elected Mr. Marcel Vernooij of the Netherlands as the new Chairperson for 2022-2023.

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 based on 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 Ministerial Decision on Measures Concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least developed and Net Food-Importing Developing Countries (NFIDC Decision). Between 1 January and 22 November, 356 agriculture notifications were circulated.

1.4. In 2022, Members posed 258 questions in connection with 150 specific notifications during the Committee's review process.² These questions were distributed as follows: 68% related to domestic support issues, 25% to market access, 2% to export competition, and the remaining 5% related to export restrictions and prohibitions and in relation to the NFIDC Decision. Specific concerns were also raised regarding outstanding notifications that some Members had yet to submit to the Committee.

1.5. Members also raised a wide range of matters relevant to the implementation of commitments, independently of notifications, under Article 18.6 of the Agreement. A total of 216 questions on 144 specific implementation matters (SIMs) were raised by 20 Members during 2022. Out of these, 73 SIMs were discussed for the first time in 2022. The remaining matters were discussed on one or more occasions in previous years.

1.6. Since 2018, the Secretariat has been monitoring the number of outstanding responses under the CoA review process.³ A gradual reduction in the number of outstanding responses has been observed since this exercise started. As of the November Committee meeting, 129 responses were pending for questions raised during 2013-2020 and 47 for questions raised in 2021. The successive Chairpersons continued to encourage Members to increase their efforts to submit the outstanding responses as a means to enhance the efficacy of the Committee's monitoring functions.

¹ The summary reports of these meetings are contained in documents G/AG/R/101, G/AG/R/102, and G/AG/R/103, and G/AG/R/104 (to be issued). The March meeting of the Committee was reconvened on 29 March 2022 to take up the suspended agenda item relating to the review of the operation of the Bali TRQ Decision (please refer to paragraph 1.10 of this report).

² See G/AG/W/217, G/AG/W/221, G/AG/W/222 and G/AG/W/226.

³ The Secretariat circulated a list of outstanding responses in documents G/AG/W/204/Rev.5, G/AG/W/204/Rev.6, G/AG/W/204/Rev.7, and G/AG/W/204/Rev.8.

1.7. At each meeting the Committee reviewed the status of Members' compliance with their notification obligations under the Agreement based on the Secretariat document summarizing the status of compliance with notification requirements.⁴ While a significant proportion of notifications are still outstanding (about 24% of all notifications from 1995-2020), Members are continuing their efforts to bring their notification record up to date.

1.8. The Committee conducted the annual monitoring exercise on the follow up to the Marrakesh NFIDC Decision under Article 16.2 of the Agreement on Agriculture and the annual consultations under Article 18.5 to review the normal growth of world agricultural trade in the context of export subsidy commitments at its November meeting.⁵ The NFIDC monitoring exercise was undertaken on the basis of Table NF:1 notifications by donor Members, contributions by Members and observer organizations⁶, as well as a background note prepared by the Secretariat.⁷ The WTO list of NFIDCs⁸ remained unchanged. The consultations to review the normal growth of world agricultural trade were informed by a background note by the Secretariat⁹.

1.9. 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 Agriculture¹⁰; (ii) the Ministerial Declaration on the Emergency Response to Food Insecurity¹¹, (iii) Ministerial Declaration on the WTO response to the COVID-19 pandemic and preparedness for future pandemics¹²; (iv) the Nairobi Ministerial Decision on Export Competition¹³; and (v) Bali Decision on Public Stockholding for food security purposes (PSH).¹⁴

1.10. On the Bali TRQ Decision, the Committee at the reconvened March meeting on 29 March reached a consensus on the draft decision on the future operation of paragraph 4 of the underfill mechanism¹⁵ and agreed to transmit the the report along with a draft decision to the General Council for its consideration. The General Council at its special meeting on 31 March 2022 adopted the decision based on the recommendations by the Committee.¹⁶ At its September meeting, the Committee approved the Secretariat Tracking Register¹⁷ with the understanding that the Committee may periodically review and adjust the register as necessary, based on the experience of the implementation of the underfill Mechanism.

1.11. The Committee took up the first triennial review of the Bali TRQ Decision in 2022 pursuant to Paragraph 3 of the recommendations of the Review of the Operation of the Bali Decision on TRQ Administration¹⁸ approved by the General Council at its meeting on 9-10 December 2019. An updated background note¹⁹ on TRQ administration, fill rates and Members' notification practices was circulated by the Secretariat to assist the review. Members considered the draft report²⁰ of the triennial review at its November meeting and agreed to finalize the review at the Committee's next meeting in March 2023 in order to get additional time to examine the report and the issues raised therein.

⁴ G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.44, G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.45, G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.46 and G/AG/GEN/86/Rev.47.

⁵ In view of the 12th Ministerial Conference originally scheduled for November-December 2021, the 2021 edition of the two exercises was undertaken at the March 2022 meeting of the Committee. Sections 3.1 and 3.2 of G/AG/R/102 refer.

⁶ G/AG/GEN/207 (submissions by the IGC), G/AG/GEN/208 (submission by the WFP), G/AG/GEN/209 (submissions by the FAO) G/AG/GEN/210 (submissions by the IICA), and G/AG/GEN/211 (submissions by the IMF). The World Bank made an oral intervention.

⁷ G/AG/W/42/series.

⁸ G/AG/5/Rev.11.

⁹ G/AG/W/32 series.

¹⁰ WT/MIN(13)/39 – WT/L/914.

¹¹ WT/MIN(22)/28 – WT/L/1139.

¹² WT/MIN(22)/31 – WT/L/1142.

¹³ WT/MIN/(15)/45 – WT/L/980.

¹⁴ WT/MIN(13)/38 – WT/L/913.

¹⁵ G/AG/32/Add.1.

¹⁶ WT/L/1132.

¹⁷ G/AG/34.

¹⁸ Annex 2 to G/AG/29.

¹⁹ G/AG/W/183/Rev.2.

²⁰ RD/AG/95/Rev.1

1.12. Members exchanged views on the elaboration of a dedicated work programme on issues related to LDCs and NFIDCs pursuant to paragraph 8 of the MC12 Declaration on the Emergency Response to Food Insecurity at its June, September and November meetings. These exchanges were facilitated by Members' written submissions²¹ as well as background note²² on LDCs and NFIDCs flexibilities prepared by the Secretariat. Members' discussions focused on the possible themes to be examined under the work programme, as well as the associated working methods for its elaboration. At the meeting of the Committee in November 2022, Members approved the draft²³ containing thematic outline and working methods²⁴ to elaborate the work programme.²⁵

1.13. As was agreed at the special meeting of the Committee in June 2020, the Committee continued to discuss 'COVID-19 and Agriculture' in its meetings in 2022. Since the September meeting of the Committee, the discussions were taken up within the overall guidance of the MC-12 Declaration on the WTO Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Preparedness for Future Pandemics specifically in light of paragraph 24 of the Declaration. The discussions were organized based on Members' *ad hoc* reports²⁶ on their measures taken in the agricultural sector in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as contributions by observer international organizations.²⁷

1.14. The follow-up to the Nairobi Ministerial Decision on Export Competition mainly consisted of the annual dedicated discussion on export competition and the second triennial review of the Decision. At the March Committee meeting, the Committee concluded the Second Triennial Review of the Nairobi Decision on export competition and adopted the report²⁸ of the review. The 2022 annual dedicated discussion took place in the September 2022 meeting based on the Secretariat's background document²⁹ as well as specific questions raised by Members on matters related to the implementation of the Nairobi Decision.³⁰

1.15. Regarding the modification of the scheduled export subsidy commitments pursuant to the Nairobi Decision, the latest situation as reported by the Chairperson at the September 2022 Committee meeting was as follows: out of the 16 Members with export subsidy reduction commitments at the time of the Nairobi Decision, 13 Members³¹ had their schedule revised pursuant to the Decision, two³² other Members had submitted their revised draft schedule in 2017 where the certification has been pending, and the remaining one Member³³ had not yet circulated its draft schedule.

1.16. With respect to the Bali PSH Decision, a group of Members informed the Committee to have formally launched consultations with India under paragraph 6 of the Decision in order to address their transparency-related concerns on the PSH programme of India.³⁴

1.17. The Committee maintained a standing item on its agenda relating to implementation-related issues, both in the framework of its follow-up to the Decision by the Doha Ministerial Conference on Implementation-Related Issues and Concerns³⁵, as well as in the framework of issues and proposals referred to it by the General Council. No Member intervened under this agenda item in 2022.

1.18. In 2022, the Committee continued its deliberations on possible elements to enhance transparency and the Committee's review process. The issue was considered in five informal meetings on 15 March, 27 June, 14 September, 27 October, and 22 November. The Committee

²¹ G/AG/W/223, G/AG/W/224, and G/AG/W/225.

²² RD/AG/94.

²³ RD/AG/97.

²⁴ G/AG/35.

²⁵ The approved work programme was later circulated as G/AG/35.

²⁶ No *ad hoc* report was received in 2022.

²⁷ Contributions by observer international organizations in 2022: G/AG/GEN/194, G/AG/GEN/195, G/AG/GEN/199/Rev.1, G/AG/GEN/201, G/AG/GEN/202, G/AG/GEN/204, and G/AG/GEN/205.

²⁸ G/AG/33 refers.

²⁹ G/AG/W/125/Rev.16, G/AG/W/125/Rev.16/Corr.1, G/AG/W/125/Rev.16/Add.1, G/AG/W/125/Rev.16/Add.2, G/AG/W/125/Rev.16/Add.3, and G/AG/W/125/Rev.16/Add.4.

³⁰ Section 4 of G/AG/W/222.

³¹ Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Iceland, Indonesia, Israel, Mexico, Norway, South Africa, Switzerland, Türkiye, United States of America, and Uruguay.

³² Canada and the European Union.

³³ Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

³⁴ Section 3.1.5 of G/AG/R/103.

³⁵ WT/MIN(01)/17, para. 2.

examined a submission³⁶ by a group of Members to launch work on a domestic support database. The Committee also continued discussions aimed at improving the timeliness and completeness of Members' notifications as well as streamlining notification requirements in the pillar of export competition³⁷.

1.19. At its November 2022 meeting, the Committee agreed, starting with the next meeting in March 2023, to add an agenda item on outstanding ES:1 notifications where Members could announce no recourse to agricultural export subsidies in order for the Secretariat to do the further procedural follow-up to release the concerned Members' ES:1 notifications for the relevant years containing a "NIL" statement. Oral announcement of "nil" export subsidies at Committee meetings would be an additional avenue for Members to fulfil outstanding ES:1 notification obligations along with the existing traditional option of submitting notifications via the Central Registry of Notifications (CRN).

1.20. On the margins of the 100th meeting of the Committee in March, a half-day CoA@100 event³⁸ was organized to recall and acknowledge the Committee's accomplishments over the last twenty-seven years.³⁹

1.21. Several online tools support the Committee's monitoring and transparency functions. Since 2012, the Agriculture Information Management System (AG-IMS)⁴⁰ has facilitated Member submission of questions and responses in the context of the Committee's monitoring of implementation of commitments. At the October 2019 meeting, the Secretariat launched a new AG-IMS function enabling on-line submission of agriculture notifications for Members. In 2022, the Secretariat introduced further enhancements to the AG-IMS Q&A system, including the addition of the feature to generate automatic reminders to Members with outstanding responses option to co-sponsor questions. During the Committee meetings in 2022, the Secretariat regularly updated Members on the progress made in the first module of the AG-IMS extension project on Export Competition Questionnaire (ECQ) which would enable online replies to the ECQ and online data extraction and reporting.

1.22. At the informal Committee meeting of 14 September, the Secretariat made a detailed presentation on the AG-IMS covering both the on-line notification system and the Q&A facility. The Secretariat also introduced a background document⁴¹ which provided detailed information on the work of the Committee and its current data automation and documentation practices.

1.23. Regarding technical assistance activities, the WTO Secretariat delivered the second in-person phase of the advanced agriculture notification workshop on 13-16 September 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland, back-to-back with the Committee meeting in September. In 2022, the WTO's Agriculture and Commodities Division delivered a workshop on the Agreement on Agriculture in Mauritius and a workshop focusing specifically on agriculture notifications in Ghana. Additionally, upon request, the Secretariat organized one-on-one trainings on the AG-IMS to assist Members with the use of the online notification submission system.

1.24. The following international intergovernmental organizations have regular observer status in the Committee: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Grains Council (IGC), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Bank. At its November meeting, the Committee agreed to renew the *ad hoc* observer status of the Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Cooperation (IICA) for 2023.

1.25. The dates of the meetings of the Committee in 2023 were announced at the November 2022 CoA meeting.⁴²

³⁶ RD/AG/92.

³⁷ RD/AG/96.

³⁸ An informal summary report of the event by the Secretariat can be found in G/AG/GEN/203.

³⁹ G/AG/GEN/196/Rev.1. and G/AG/GEN/203.

⁴⁰ <http://agims.wto.org/>.

⁴¹ G/AG/GEN/206.

⁴² G/AG/GEN/212.