



WORKSHOP ON AGRICULTURE NOTIFICATIONS

Geneva, Switzerland

22-24 September 2009

BACKGROUND NOTE

Introduction

1. The Workshop on Agriculture Notifications is being organized in Geneva, Switzerland, from 22 to 24 September 2009, back-to-back with the 56th Regular Session of the Committee on Agriculture (CoA), so as to facilitate the participation of capital-based officials. The Workshop is intended to be a technical assistance activity, a training opportunity and a forum for exchange of information, and not an instance where participants or speakers would be expected to provide explanations on behalf of their governments.

Objectives

2. The objective of the Workshop is to enable Members to fulfil their notification obligations in a timely manner and in line with the transparency requirements contained in the Agreement on Agriculture. The Workshop is aimed at studying the existing notification requirements and formats (G/AG/2 and Add.1) and providing a platform to discuss specific technical issues Members may face when preparing agriculture notifications and analyzing notifications submitted by their trading partners. Some workshop participants will also share their experiences and identify or suggest best practices as regards institutional capacity to prepare and analyze notifications and participate in the Review Process under the CoA.

3. By the end of the Workshop, participants will have:

- become familiar with the specific notification requirements and formats in the areas of market access, domestic support, export subsidies, export prohibitions and restrictions, and the follow-up to the Marrakesh NFIDC Decision;
- improved their knowledge of existing tools that might be useful in preparing and analyzing notifications;
- gained a better understanding of the purpose and procedures of the Review Process under the CoA;
- learnt from other Members' experiences about the institutional capacity building necessary to prepare and analyze notifications and to actively participate in the Review Process;
- identified specific actions they could take (i.e. develop an *Action Plan*) to ensure that relevant notification obligations are fulfilled in a timely manner.

Preparatory work

4. In preparing for the Workshop, participants are requested to:

- get acquainted with the status of compliance with the notification obligations assumed by their respective governments under the CoA;
- identify any challenges in the preparation/submission/analysis of notifications; and
- where relevant, come prepared with technical questions.

5. To assist in these preparations and to encourage active involvement in the Workshop, participants are also requested to consider the following queries¹, as may be appropriate:

- What are the notification obligations relevant to your delegation?
- What is the status of compliance with your obligations? (The latest status of compliance can be downloaded from the Members' password-protected web site.)
- Which domestic stakeholders (i.e. departments/ministries/agencies) would be involved in the data collection, preparation/approval/submission of your notifications, analysis of notifications of your trading partners, preparation of questions/answers for the Review Process?
- What domestic system/communication channels are in place through which notification requirements and deadlines can be circulated to all stakeholders?
- Have you encountered any problems in preparing/submitting/analyzing notifications and/or in participating in the Review Process and if so, please identify those problems?
- Have you been able to overcome those problems and if so, what solutions have been implemented?
- Is there a need for any technical/institutional capacity building, technical assistance and training and if so, what would be needed to develop/preserve/transfer the necessary know-how in the area of agriculture notifications?
- Are you familiar with/have you ever used the currently available tools? (Please see a listing of such tools in the Annex to document G/AG/GEN/83.)
- What specific actions would it take to ensure that your notification obligations are fulfilled in a timely manner?

Action Plans

6. The *Action Plan* is aimed at tackling any problems that each participant faces in preparing/submitting/analyzing notifications, and at identifying ways to enhance the technical/institutional capacity and know-how related to notifications and the participation in the Review Process. It is hoped that the preparatory work described above will be useful in helping participants identify possible subject(s) to be covered by the *Action Plan*.

7. It is also envisaged that the *Action Plans* could become useful means and starting points for the relevant stakeholders to consider any mentoring or technical assistance, either from the Secretariat or from other Members with knowledge and experience in the identified areas. To this end, and subject to participants' demands, the Secretariat could, for example, facilitate the establishment of a forum for mentoring and technical assistance in light of the suggestions contained in paras. 90-91 of the survey report (G/AG/GEN/85).

8. Moreover, as part of the follow-up, the Agriculture and Commodities Division staff remain at the disposal of delegations for consultations and technical assistance, as appropriate. Any queries related to the preparation of notifications can also be sent using the e-mail form which is under development on the WTO public web site.

¹ Some questions are similar to those used in the questionnaire-based survey conducted earlier this year. In this regard, Members that have not yet sent their responses to the questionnaire circulated in document G/AG/GEN/83 dated 2 April 2009 are encouraged to do so as soon as possible by e-mail to: majda.petschen@wto.org.