

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

APPLICANTS FOR OBSERVER STATUS

Note by the Secretariat

As requested at the meeting of March 1999 the Secretariat has summarized the information provided by the various bodies seeking observer status in the SPS Committee. This summary focuses on the membership, mandate and scope of work of each applicant, identifies potential contributions to the work of the SPS Committee, and reciprocity. Information regarding observer status in other WTO bodies has also been included.

I. OFFICE INTERNATIONAL DE LA VIGNE ET DU VIN (OIV)

1. Membership

Membership is open to all states. Current membership (46):

Algeria	Finland	Morocco	Sweden
Argentina	France	Netherlands	Switzerland
Australia	Georgia	New Zealand	Syria
Austria	Germany	Norway	Tunisia
Belgium	Greece	Peru	Turkey
Bolivia	Hungary	Portugal	Ukraine
Brazil	Israel	Romania	United Kingdom
Bulgaria	Italy	Russia	United States
Chile	Lebanon	Slovak Republic	Uruguay
Cyprus	Luxemburg	Slovenia	ex-Yugoslavia Serbia, Montenegro)
Czech Republic	Mexico	South Africa	
Denmark	Moldavia	Spain	

2. Mandate, Scope and Area of Work

The OIV's work includes:

- setting international standards related to wine and wine products, including those concerning food safety, nutrition, toxicology, pesticide residues and contaminants;
- harmonizing methods of analysis and certification;
- organizing plant protection conferences about diseases which affect wine;
- fighting specific diseases; and
- protecting appellations of origin.

In recent years, there has been special focus on surplus control, maintaining diversity, environmental protection, relations between Europe and America, and on ways of facilitating international trade.

3. Contribution to the Work of the SPS Committee

The OIV has great experience in the areas of consumer and plant protection as it relates to wine. The OIV sets international standards related to wine, and its autonomous competence in this area is recognized by FAO. Codex standards do not cover wine and alcoholic beverages in general. The OIV wishes to be informed about the work of the SPS Committee, and offer the skills of its expert groups if necessary.

The OIV has also requested observer status in the General Council, the Council for TRIPS, and the Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade.

4. Reciprocity

The OIV is offering to grant the SPS Committee Secretariat observer status, which would allow it to participate in the work of the General Assembly, Commissions and Sub-Commissions, and groups of experts dealing with SPS issues.

II. AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC GROUP OF STATES (ACP GROUP)

1. Membership

The ACP Group has 71 members, of which 48 are in Africa, 15 in the Caribbean, and 8 in the Pacific.

2. Mandate, Scope and Area of Work

The ACP Group's work includes:

- to coordinate the activities of the ACP States in the application of the Lomé Convention;
- to contribute to the development of greater and closer economic, social and cultural relations among developing countries and to that end, ensure cooperation between the ACP States in the fields of trade, science and technology, industry, transport and communications, education, training and research, information and communication, the environment, demography and human resources; and
- to contribute to the promotion of effective regional, interregional and intra-ACP cooperation among the ACP States and between developing countries in general, and to strengthen the regional organizations to which they belong.

3. Contribution to the Work of the SPS Committee

The ACP Group organized seven regional seminars on the results of the Uruguay Round in Cooperation with the WTO Secretariat and the European Commission in 1996.

Previously, the ACP Group had observer status in the GATT Contracting Parties, and the Council of Representatives. It currently has observer status in the Committees on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions, Trade and Development, Trade and Environment, Market Access, Rules of Origin and Customs Valuation. It has been granted ad hoc observer status in the Committees on Anti-Dumping Practices, Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, Safeguards, and Technical Barriers to Trade, and has furthermore requested observer status in the General Council, the Council for Trade in Goods, the Council for Trade in Services, and the Committees on Agriculture, Import Licensing, and Trade-Related Investment Measures.

4. Reciprocity

The WTO Secretariat has participated in preparatory seminars for ACP Senior Officials prior to the Singapore and Geneva Ministerial Conferences and has access to documents or proceedings of meetings organized by the ACP institutions.

III. EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION (EFTA)

1. Membership (4):

Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland

2. Mandate, Scope and Area of Work

EFTA's work includes:

- monitoring and management of free trade relations between the EFTA member States on the basis of the Stockholm Convention, the legal foundation of the Association;
- three of the EFTA States and the European Union have signed the Agreement on a European Economic Area (EEA), which entered into force on 1 January 1994. Through this Agreement the EEA EFTA States participate in the Single Market, with regard to the free movement of goods, capital, services and persons. In addition, this agreement covers non-economic cooperation in areas such as research and development, education, social policy and the environment;
- developing and managing relationships with a large number of non-EU countries; and
- monitoring and managing the relationships between EFTA States, managing and coordinating the EFTA Agreement, as well as developing and managing relations with a considerable number of non-EU countries. All this involves elements which are closely related to the work of the SPS Committee.

EFTA's aim in the sanitary and phytosanitary field is to avoid unnecessary obstacles to trade, and to create transparency and consistency. All the work of the SPS Committee is of relevance to and will create a framework for ongoing important EEA activities. Of special interest to EFTA is the SPS Committee's work on risk assessment and risk management, use of international standards and consistency in the application of the concept of an appropriate level of protection.

3. Contribution to the Work of the SPS Committee

EFTA coordinates SPS issues in the EFTA/EEA region. Observer status is important to ensure harmonization of the interpretation of WTO rules and provisions.

Previously, EFTA had observer status in the GATT Contracting Parties, the Council of Representatives, and the GATT Committee on Trade and Development. Currently it has observer status in the Trade Policy Review Body, the Committees on Balance-of-Payments Restrictions, Regional Trade Agreements, Trade and Development, Trade and Environment, and Rules of Origin. It has ad hoc observer status in the Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade, and has requested observer status in the General Council, the Council for Trade in Goods, the Council for Trade in Services, and the Council for TRIPS.

4. Reciprocity

There has been good cooperation and information exchange between the WTO and EFTA Secretariats. EFTA provides the WTO Secretariat with general information as well as its annual report. All new EFTA Free Trade Agreements are notified to the WTO. All SPS-related EEA rules are made public in the EEA supplement to the Official Journal of the European Communities.

IV. INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION ON AGRICULTURE (IICA)

1. Membership (34):

Antigua and Barbuda	Colombia	Haiti	St. Kitts and Nevis
Argentina	Costa Rica	Honduras	St. Lucia
Bahamas	Dominica	Jamaica	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Barbados	Dominican Republic	Mexico	Suriname
Belize	Ecuador	Nicaragua	Trinidad and Tobago
Bolivia	El Salvador	Panama	United States
Brazil	Grenada	Paraguay	Uruguay
Canada	Guatemala	Peru	Venezuela
Chile	Guyana		

2. Mandate, Scope and Area of Work

IICA's technical cooperation programme focuses on policies and trade; science, technology and natural resources; agricultural health; and sustainable rural development. In the area of agricultural health and food safety, IICA's long term objectives are to ensure that the countries of the Americas are in the best possible position as regards agricultural health and food safety, so that their animal and plant-based products comply with the strictest health and hygiene standards and can, as a result, compete advantageously on the international market. IICA's core strategy for obtaining this objective is to contribute to the modernization of the organization, infrastructure and operation of national agricultural health systems, and cooperate with them so that they can meet their regional and international commitments.

Critical strategic areas in the field of agricultural health are:

- modernization of national agricultural health systems, fostering the active participation of the private sector;
- practical application and harmonization of sanitary and phytosanitary measures in international trade;
- forewarnings and action on emergency issues; and
- strengthening the inter-American and regional approaches.

3. Contribution to the Work of the SPS Committee

In 1987, the Inter-American Board of Agriculture, IICA's governing body, expanded IICA's mandate to include monitoring the Uruguay Round negotiations, evaluating their implications for the agrifood sector in the region, and assisting member countries in their compliance. Recently, this mandate was renewed to offer technical cooperation services to member countries in preparation for continuing the agricultural reform process in the WTO and future negotiations.

IICA also has requested observer status in the Committee on Agriculture.

4. Reciprocity

The WTO Secretariat has broad access to IICA documents and proceedings, and has participated in several technical meetings and workshops organized by IICA. IICA offers to grant the WTO observer status in its governing Inter-American Board of Agriculture.

V. ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)

1. Membership (29):

Australia	France	Japan	Poland
Austria	Germany	Korea	Portugal
Belgium	Greece	Luxembourg	Spain
Canada	Hungary	Mexico	Sweden
Czech Republic	Iceland	Netherlands	Switzerland
Denmark	Ireland	New Zealand	Turkey
Finland	Italy	Norway	United States
			United Kingdom

2. Mandate, Scope and Area of Work

The OECD is an intergovernmental, interdisciplinary organization with expertise in a broad range of economic and trade-related fields. One of its key objectives, as reiterated by OECD Members at their meeting in April 1998, is to provide support for a strong multilateral trading system. This gives the OECD an immediate interest in most of the policy and research activities being undertaken by the WTO (and formerly the GATT). OECD produces analytical work to help governments define their policies and to facilitate the negotiations of international agreements, including the preparations for future multilateral trade negotiations. In a number of key areas OECD serves as a forum aiming at harmonized policies and instruments for their implementation. For instance, in the context of the OECD Council Decisions on the Mutual Acceptance of Data in the Assessment of Chemicals, Principles for Good Laboratory Practices, as well as Test Guidelines, have been developed by the OECD since 1981 and are widely accepted and used by OECD members and non-members. Similarly, the last OECD Agriculture Ministers' meeting endorsed analytical work to identify and analyse existing and new policy approaches to address issues related *inter alia* to food safety and to provide support to the multilateral trading system.

3. Contribution to the Work of the SPS Committee

OECD activities of direct relevance to the objectives of the SPS Agreement include:

- OECD work on *Mutual Acceptance of Data in the Assessment of Chemicals*, including the *Guidelines for the Testing of Chemicals* and the *Principles of Good Laboratory Practices (GLP)*; these are used as standards for testing the safety of products (chemicals, pesticides, pharmaceuticals, etc.). Moreover, the *Procedures for monitoring compliance with GLP* are used for assessing the conformity of testing of products against GLP standards;
- The OECD *Pesticide Programme* aims at harmonizing pesticide review procedures, sharing the work by member countries on pesticide evaluation and finding new approaches to risk reduction;
- OECD work on biotechnology: the trade-related issues which arise in the agro-food sector are addressed in the *Working Group on Harmonisation of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology*. Also relevant are activities like the OECD Ad Hoc Experts Meeting on Assessing the Safety of Novel Foods, organized in December 1995 and October 1998. In these meetings WHO and FAO were invited in their capacity as managers of the Codex Alimentarius Commission; and

- OECD work on seed certification: In the framework of the OECD Schemes for the certification of seeds, National Designated Authorities control the health status of seeds before certification.

Previously, the OECD had observer status in the GATT Contracting Parties, the Council of Representatives, and the GATT Committee on Trade and Development. Currently it has observer status in the General Council, the Trade Policy Review Body, the Council for Trade in Goods, the Council for TRIPS, and the Committees on Agriculture, Balance-of-Payments Restrictions, Trade and Development, Trade and Environment, Rules of Origin, Technical Barriers to Trade and Trade-Related Investment Measures. It has ad hoc observer status in the Committees on Anti-Dumping Practices, Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, and Safeguards. It has requested observer status in the Council for Trade in Services and the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements.

4. Reciprocity

Since the OECD was created in 1961, its relations with the GATT have been based on:

- An arrangement between the OECD Secretary-General and the Executive Secretary of the GATT to ensure liaison between the Secretariats of the two organizations; and
- Mutual observership between the two organizations, permitting attendance at most meetings of mutual interest.

The GATT Secretariat was regularly represented by an observer at meetings of the Trade Committee, the Agriculture Committee, the Joint Working Party of those two bodies, the Council at Ministerial level, and other bodies, mostly on an ad hoc basis. Following the adoption by the WTO General Council of its guidelines on observer status of IIGOs this procedure has been formalized. The WTO Secretariat has been granted observer status in OECD bodies in which there is considered to be a synergy of effort and a comparable and reciprocal status has been granted to the OECD Secretariat in most relevant WTO bodies. The extension of the WTO's responsibilities to areas that were not previously included in the strict context of trade has increased the scope of mutual interest between the two organizations and now underpins a broad-based exchange of information and co-operation.

The WTO Secretariat has access to OECD documents classified as "*for official use*" or "*general distribution*" on-line through OLIS.

VI. REGIONAL INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL HEALTH ORGANIZATION (OIRSA)

1. Membership (9)

Belize	El Salvador	Mexico
Costa Rica	Guatemala	Nicaragua
Dominican Republic	Honduras	Panama

2. Mandate, Scope and Area of Work

OIRSA's area of work includes:

- to promote the economic and social development of the region's population through the production of wholesome and high-quality agricultural produce which satisfies the internal and extra-regional demand for food. (Slogan: "Agricultural health for human well-being");
- animal health, plant health, and regional coordination of quarantine procedures; and
- agricultural health projects, as well as technical and administrative management projects.

3. Contribution to the Work of the SPS Committee

- OIRSA helps Members to improve the application of SPS Measures under the terms of GATT 1994 and the SPS Agreement;
- promotes activities aimed at dissemination, promotion and application of the SPS Agreement, including a seminar held in Nicaragua in 1998 with the participation of the Chairman of the SPS Committee and representatives from IPPC and Codex, and another seminar held in Costa Rica; and
- has drawn up regulations on the application of SPS measures in inter-Central American trade.

4. Reciprocity

All documents related to the implementation of the SPS Agreement are available on the OIRSA web site.

VII. LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC SYSTEM (SELA)

1. Membership (28):

Argentina	Colombia	Guatemala	Panama
Bahamas	Costa Rica	Guyana	Paraguay
Barbados	Cuba	Haiti	Peru
Belize	Dominican Republic	Honduras	Suriname
Bolivia	Ecuador	Jamaica	Trinidad and Tobago
Brazil	El Salvador	Mexico	Uruguay
Chile	Grenada	Nicaragua	Venezuela

2. Mandate, Scope and Area of Work

SELA is a permanent regional body for consultation, coordination, cooperation and joint economic and social promotion. The fundamental purposes of SELA are:

- to promote intra-regional cooperation in order to accelerate the economic and social development of its members;
- to provide a permanent system of consultation and coordination for the adoption of common positions and strategies on economic and social matters in international bodies and forums as well as before third countries and groups of countries;
- specifically, SELA's objectives include stimulating satisfactory levels of production and supply of agricultural products, energy, and other commodities, with emphasis on the specific supply of foodstuffs; and to encourage coordination of national policies for protection and supply with a view to establishing a Latin American policy in this area.

3. Contribution to the Work of the SPS Committee

The SELA Permanent Secretariat provided technical assistance to Latin American and Caribbean missions during the Uruguay Round negotiations and currently keeps close ties with Member State missions to the WTO. In 1998, SELA held a workshop on "Agricultural Trade in the Multilateral Framework: Prospects for Latin America and the Caribbean" with the participation of the WTO Secretariat.

Previously, SELA had observer status in the GATT Contracting Parties, the Council of Representatives, and the GATT Committee on Trade and Development. Currently it has observer status in the Committees for Trade and Development and Trade and Environment. It has requested observer status in the General Council, the Council for Trade in Goods, the Council for Trade in Services, the Council for TRIPS, and the Committees on Agriculture, Regional Trade Agreements, Market Access and Trade-Related Investment Measures.

4. Reciprocity

All SELA information is available on the web page, or through the Liaison Officer in Geneva.
