WORLD TRADE

ORGANIZATION

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures   Original: English

CHINA'S TRANSITIONAL REVIEW MECHANISM

Questions to China from the Permanent Mission of the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu in the context of the Transitional Review Mechanism under Paragraph 18 of the Protocol of Accession of the People's Republic of China

The following communication, dated 25 October 2002, has been received from the Permanent Mission of the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu, with the request that it be circulated to Members, for the purposes of the Transitional Review to take place at the Committee's meeting on 7-8 November 2002.

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China's quarantine procedures for imported fresh fruits

According to the SPS Agreement, sanitary and phytosanitary measures shall be applied in a justifiable, transparent and least trade-restrictive manner. China's regulations require that for any fresh fruits imported directly through the ports of Da Lian, Tianjin, Qinhuangdao and Shanghai, a quarantine permit has to be applied for in advance.

It has been reported that traders often encountered inconsistencies in the process of obtaining a permit. Different procedures are being applied by different officials and agencies in different ports. Furthermore, the application procedures are so time-consuming that it often results in damage to the quality of the fresh fruit being imported and erosion of their market value.

In order to fulfill its accession commitments on transparency, China has promised to notify the WTO of all laws, regulations and other measures relating to its quarantine procedures and to provide information on China's foreign trade system. Thus, to ease the burden on importers caused by the procedural inconsistencies, China's clarification in this regard will be appreciated. Moreover, it would be greatly appreciated if China could publish a standard operational procedures to be observed by all ports of entry.

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