



WTO SPS COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP ON APPROVAL PROCEDURES PROCESS

SUBMISSION FROM CANADA

The following communication, received on 8 June 2020, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Canada.

Canada proposes that the SPS Committee working group on approval procedures, which is part of the Fifth Review, commence following the June 2020 SPS Committee meeting. To initiate the way forward for this work, Canada proposes the following process.

1 WORKING GROUP TITLE

1. SPS Committee Working Group (WG) on Approval Procedures

2 FUNCTION AND REPORTING TO COMMITTEE

2. The WG will primarily work electronically. The WG will also meet on the margins of the SPS Committee meetings, in person or virtually, depending on whether the SPS Committee is meeting in person or taking place virtually.
3. The steward(s) of the WG will report on its work to the informal and formal SPS Committee meetings to keep the Committee informed of its deliberations.

3 PARTICIPATION AND STEWARD

4. The WG would be open to all Members and Observers. The WG should identify from among its Members one or more neutral "stewards" to oversee and facilitate the work of the WG. Canada notes its willingness to act as a steward. Members and Observers who are interested in participating in the WG, and Members interested in acting as a steward, should submit their contact email address to the Secretariat (spscommittee@wto.org) no later than one month after the SPS Committee meeting launching the WG.
5. All Members and Observers who indicated an interest in the WG will be included in an email list that would be distributed to the WG steward(s) two business days following the deadline for joining the WG.

4 DESCRIPTION OF WORK

6. The working group could explore the following topics:
- a) Key challenges of approval procedures that impact international trade and that the Committee should seek to address.
 - b) Principles of approval procedures that facilitate international trade while meeting the importing Member's appropriate level of sanitary or phytosanitary protection and the Committee's role in highlighting these principles.
 - c) Tools available and best practices to enhance the implementation of the obligations of the SPS Agreement as they apply to approval procedures.
 - d) Other topics raised by WG members over the course of the WG.
7. Finally, following the examination of topics a) to d), the WG will give consideration to topic e) possible future work of the Committee on approval procedures.
8. Following the conclusion of its deliberations, the WG will submit a written report to the Committee.

5 LANGUAGE

9. The process and liaison with WG members will be conducted in English. The Secretariat may assist with translation of comments and proposals, if requested.

6 PROPOSED TIMELINES AND NEXT STEPS¹

10. The deadlines suggested for the proposed process are as follows. The WG will conclude at the SPS Committee meeting following three rounds of deliberations (over three SPS Committee meetings) unless the WG and Committee agree to extend the timeframe of the WG. If the timeframe for the WG is extended, a revised set of timelines and next steps will be issued.
11. First round (period between the SPS Committee meeting launching the WG and next SPS Committee meeting):
- a. Members and Observers interested in being part of the working group should submit contact information to the Secretariat no later than one month after the SPS Committee meeting launching the WG;
 - b. The Secretariat will provide to the steward(s) and all participants the email list of interested Members and Observers by two business days following the deadline for joining the WG;
 - c. WG members will submit written proposals concerning topics a) to d) to the steward(s), and the Secretariat, no later than four weeks after the deadline for joining the WG;
 - d. The steward(s) will develop a written document consolidating the input received, which will be circulated to all members of the WG for the opportunity to provide comments no later than four weeks after the deadline for written proposals.
 - e. The steward(s) will prepare a revised document based on the input and comments received, which will be circulated to all members of the WG no later than two weeks after the deadline for comments.
 - f. Meeting of the WG on the margins of the SPS Committee meeting, where WG members will discuss the revised document.
 - g. The steward(s) will report on the work of the WG at the informal SPS Committee meeting to provide the Membership the opportunity to discuss the work of the WG.
 - h. The steward(s) will report on the work of the WG and discussion at the informal SPS Committee meeting at the formal SPS Committee meeting, as appropriate.
12. Second round (period between the next SPS Committee meeting and the second SPS Committee meeting) and third round (period between the second SPS Committee meeting and the third SPS Committee meeting).

¹ Note that timelines and next steps could be revised by the WG as appropriate.

13. The format for the second and third rounds of consultations will remain substantially the same as the first round.

14. In addition to the steps from the first round, input received during the informal and formal SPS Committee meetings at the end of the previous round will be incorporated. As appropriate, the steward(s) will identify key themes and concepts, develop questions for consideration by the WG, and identify information gaps.

15. During the third round, the WG will also give consideration to possible future work of the Committee on approval procedures. The third round will end with the formal SPS Committee meeting determining whether to conclude or extend the WG.
