

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

G/TBT/W/115
17 June 1999

(99-2455)

Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade

Original: English

GENETICALLY MODIFIED AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD PRODUCTS

Submission from the United States

The United States has transmitted the following communication dated 15 June 1999, to the Secretariat, with the request that it be circulated to Members of the Committee.

1. The United States would like to draw the attention of the Committee to the notifications concerning genetically modified agricultural and food products. In the past we have expressed our general interest in ensuring transparency in the development, adoption and enforcement of technical regulations, and have raised concerns with a specific regulation adopted by one Member. At this meeting we would like to simply draw the attention of the Committee to some broader issues, without specifically commenting on any one of the individual notifications at this time.

2. Our review of notifications made under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) shows that 11 notifications have been made which deal with the issue of genetically modified agricultural or food products. We would also note that additional notifications have also been made under the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. The following table contains the TBT notification number, Member notifying, date of notification and a brief description of the proposal notified under the TBT Agreement.

No.	Notification No.	Country	Date Submitted	Description
1.	95.266	Canada	12/9/95	Novel foods
2.	97.151	European Union	21/4/97	Foods and food ingredients made from genetically modified soya and maize
3.	97.382	European Union	6/8/97	Products Containing GMOs
4.	97.383	Norway	6/8/97	Prepacked Foodstuffs & ingredients except food additives, flavourings & extraction solvents
5.	97.766	European Union	12/12/97	Labelling foods/food ingredients produced from genetically modified soya and maize
6.	98.442	Germany	28/8/98	Foodstuffs
7.	99.095	Switzerland	23/3/99	Products containing living genetically modified organisms (LGMO) or pathogenic organisms, such as seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, food, animal feedingstuffs, live vaccines
8.	99.204	Republic of Korea	3/5/99	Agricultural & fishery products and their processed products
9.	99.134	Australia	26/3/99	Foods Derived from Gene Technology
10.	99.244	New Zealand	19/5/99	Foods Derived from Gene Technology
11.	99.250	Switzerland	21/5/99	Medicines that contain/consist of genetically modified organisms or medicines manufactured by recombinant DNA technology

3. It is worth observing that during the first two years (1995-1996) only one notification was made. During the next two years (1997-1998) Members notified five additional proposals covering this new technology. In the first five months of 1999 an additional five proposals have been notified for Members' review and comments.

4. Clearly, there is a sharply increased rate of proposed new technical regulations for genetically modified agricultural and food products, which indicates increasing national debate regarding the need for technical regulations. While the number of notifications concerning agricultural and food products derived from modern genetic transfer techniques comprises a relatively small part of the significantly larger product domain covered by the TBT Agreement, we would emphasize that significant international trade in a wide variety of agricultural and food products is involved.

5. The United States also notes that international standards applicable to labelling and other aspects of agricultural and food products stemming from modern genetic transfer techniques are generally non-existent or only recently has work been undertaken in earnest to address international guidelines and standards, which could be relevant for Members developing science-based regulatory processes for food safety reviews. We would urge Members to participate in the work of the Codex Alimentarius to advance agreement on relevant international standards.
