

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

RESTRICTED

WT/ACC/SPEC/LTU/9

30 September 1997

(97-4086)

---

**Working Party on the  
Accession of Lithuania**

Original: English

## ACCESSION OF LITHUANIA

### Request for Transition Period to Implement Specific Provisions of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

The Lithuanian Government herewith submits information on the most recent status of Lithuania's legislation and regulations and its institutional infrastructure in the field of sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

With its small economy still at the stage of recovery from a command economy, Lithuania faces a number of difficulties to fully bring its SPS measures in line with WTO requirements. Considerable human and administrative resources are needed:

- to draft the legislation and regulations and go through the constitutional and other approval processes;
- to set up the various regulatory bodies, start running the system and provide for enforcement;
- to build laboratories, acquire the equipment and instruments, introduce the processing techniques;
- to participate in the work of international organisations, negotiate agreements with other countries, ensure transparency through publication, notification, translation into English, etc.

The significant budgetary resources required to meet the costs of fixed capital investment (building, equipment), recruitment, training and remuneration of technically qualified personnel and to run the system (inspection, policing, enquiry point, etc.) cannot all be mustered immediately. The outlays need to be spread over a number of years.

The description in the attached paper of the stage of advancement and of the ongoing process is proof of the enormous progress made by Lithuania in the last few years in the field of SPS measures. It shows the capacity and determination of the public authorities to move ahead. What has already been achieved most probably compares favourably with measures some long-standing WTO Members apply today in this field.

A short transition period to achieve full compliance is required (particularly to establish the WTO enquiry point and make it fully operational). This could be done by 1 January 2000.

This request is submitted in a constructive spirit. Lithuania wishes to avoid accepting commitments that it knows to be beyond what it actually expects to be able to apply and respect in good faith, given its present human and material resources.

ATTACHMENTLithuania's Progress in Implementing the Agreement on the  
Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

It is recalled that in Lithuania food safety is under the jurisdiction of the National Nutrition Centre to the Ministry of Health, the State Veterinary Service and the State Plant Quarantine Inspectorate to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Responsibility for inspection of unprocessed animal products (e.g. meat and milk) is being shared by the National Nutrition Centre and State Veterinary Service. Animal health is under the jurisdiction of the State Veterinary Service. Plant health is under the jurisdiction of the State Plant Quarantine Inspectorate.

Regarding transparency, Lithuania already publishes promptly all sanitary and phytosanitary regulations which have been adopted. Lithuania is establishing a process to allow a reasonable period of time between the publication of a sanitary or phytosanitary regulation and its entry into force to allow producers in exporting Members to adapt to the new requirements and expects this process to be completed in the nearest future. Lithuania is in the process of creating an enquiry point at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (but due to financial problems it is difficult to specify an exact date for its completion). The enquiry point also will carry out the notification obligations of the Agreement.

Lithuania already participates in the work of international organizations (the Codex Alimentarius, the International Office of Epizooties and soon, the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization). To the greatest extent possible and appropriate, Lithuania is basing its SPS measures on the international standards and guidelines created by those organizations.

Hereafter are listed the tasks already completed, those currently being performed and those that remain to be accomplished in the following fields:

- SPS measures applicable to food products;
- SPS measures in the veterinary field;
- SPS measures applicable to plants and plant products.

As can be ascertained on the basis of this survey practically all that is needed to apply the Agreement on SPS measures will shortly be in place.

1. SPS Measures in the Field of Food Products
  - (a) The tasks already completed

Lithuania has been a member of the Codex Alimentarius Commission since 1992. There are 6 large laboratories in the Public Health Service under the Ministry of Health. They test for pesticides, heavy metals and other chemical contaminants in food and are located in the biggest cities. The Central Laboratory is in the National Nutrition Centre in Vilnius. There are 35 small chemical and microbiological laboratories situated across the various districts of Lithuania. They test for nitrates and microbiological levels in food. The National Nutrition Centre and the State Hygiene Inspectorate are responsible for the risk assessment of food.

Framework legislation in place:

- Lithuanian Standard LST CAC/RCP 1 Recommended International Code of Practice. General Principles of Food Hygiene, 1995. This international CAC document was approved by Lithuania and will be implemented by the end of 1997;

- Lithuanian Hygiene Norm HN 38-1993. The Maximum Amounts of Unhealthy Substances Permitted in Tobacco Products (approval of Ministry of Health No. 24 of 7 February 1994). The document describes all safety and quality requirements for tobacco products produced in Lithuania as well as abroad. These requirements conform to international requirements; they must be read in conjunction with the Lithuanian Law on Tobacco Control, approved on 20 December 1995, which prohibits the production and import of snuff and chewing tobacco.

(b) Tasks being performed at present

Improvements to the framework legislation:

The adoption of the Law on Food is planned for during the course of 1998. At present the final draft of the Law is being co-ordinated with international experts. The Law addresses the regulation of food safety for human health. It will establish the foundations for the management of food safety and quality system, protect consumers from unhealthy production and false or misleading advertising of food. The Law will also define the fields of competence and responsibility of the various institutions conducting supervision of food safety.

“Procedure of Food Products Import into Republic of Lithuania and their Quality Control” (Government Resolution No.35 of 9 January 1995). This document describes the obligatory requirements for food products intended for import into Lithuania. It provides the structure and functions of authorities involved in food quality control in the process of importation and was prepared in accordance with FAO Food and Nutrition Paper 14/15 Manual of Food Quality Control, volume 15 Imported Food Inspection, Rome 1993. Amendments are being drafted now to improve implementation of Codex Alimentarius and WTO provisions (expected approval and implementation during the course of 1998-1999).

“The Lithuanian Hygiene Norm HN 54-1995. Raw Materials and Foodstuffs. Maximum Permitted Levels of Contaminants and Radionuclides” (approval of Ministry of Health No.10 of 6 March 1995). It is a basic document which lists all allowed maximum levels for chemical agents and radioactive materials in foodstuffs produced in Lithuania as well as abroad. The established levels of pesticides and other chemical contaminants are harmonised to recommendations of CAC Pesticide Residues in Food Codex Alimentarius Supplement 1 to volume 2, FAO/WHO, Rome 1993 and other CAC guidelines designed for concrete foodstuffs. Amendments are being drafted now for the implementation of new Codex Alimentarius provisions (expected approval and implementation during the course of 1998-1999).

”The Lithuanian Hygiene Norm HN 53-1995. Approved Food Additives”. (approval of Ministry of Health No.8 of 22 February 1995). This document includes a positive list of approved food additives and permitted levels of additives in concrete foodstuffs. Amendments of this document are being drafted now to approximate the correspond to the positive list of the European Communities (expected approval and implementation during the course of 1998-1999).

“Lithuanian Hygiene Norm HN 26-1994. Raw Materials and Foodstuffs. Allowable Levels of Microbial Contamination” (approval of Ministry of Health No.59 of 11 February 1994). This document contains allowed maximum levels for microbes in foodstuffs produced in Lithuania and specifies imports. This document is not yet harmonised to Codex Alimentarius recommendations. A new edition is being drafted (expected approval and implementation during the course of 1998-1999).

(c) The remaining tasks

- preparation of regulations and creation of better mechanisms for risk assessment;
- Lithuania needs to apply the HACCP system to all food processing, trade and catering companies. This is expected to be achieved by the year 2000.

2. SPS Measures in the Veterinary Field(a) The tasks already completed

Lithuania has been a member of the OIE (International Office of Epizooties) since 1936, this membership was renewed in 1992. Lithuania also has been a member of Foot-and-Mouth Disease Commission at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) since 1993. The State Veterinary Service follows the recommendations and standards of OIE: “Manual of Standards for diagnostic tests and vaccines”, 1992, and the “International Animal Health Code (mammals, birds and bees)”, 1992. Also State Veterinary Service is responsible for the risk assessment.

The National Veterinary Laboratory carries out monitoring programmes and performs tests for diseases with reference to the OIE recommendations and standards. Every month, the State Veterinary Service sends reports to the OIE about the epizootic situation in Lithuania and every week gets from OIE the latest information about the epizootic situation in the world.

Veterinary supervision and control is performed by 10 county veterinary services, 34 district state veterinary clinics and 4 stations of city veterinary sanitation. Every county state veterinary service has a veterinary laboratory. The National Veterinary Laboratory performs the mandatory tests and serves as a methods guidance centre for the state laboratories of the country. Border veterinary controls are conducted by the Border and Transport State Veterinary Service which reports to the State Veterinary Service. 16 border veterinary posts and 3 veterinary posts are in operation. They perform veterinary medical control of livestock, fodder, raw materials and food of animal origin.

Framework legislation in place:

- the State Veterinary Service is guided by the Law on Veterinary Activities (17 December 1991). This law defines the basic tasks, structure and management of veterinary activities .
- surveillance of the import and transit of animals, feedstuffs and products of animal origin into/through Lithuania is conducted in accordance with Government Resolution No. 284 (27 April 1993) “On Veterinary and Sanitary Requirements on Livestock, their Products, Raw Materials and Fodder Imported to the Republic of Lithuania and Transported as Transit through its Territory”.

(b) Tasks being performed presently

Improvement to the framework legislation:

See above description under “SPS measures in the field of food products” of the Law on Food.

(c) The remaining tasks

- preparation of regulations and creation of better mechanisms for risk assessment.

3. SPS Measures in the Field of Plants and Plant Products

(a) The tasks already completed

The Phytosanitary Research Centre tests for quarantine diseases, pests and weeds and provides the possibility for research in these areas. The simple visual analysis of weeds, nematodes and pests are implemented at the 10 regional plant quarantine stations located across Lithuania. During the course of 1998 the State Plant Quarantine Inspectorate will be reorganized as a new institution, the State Plant Protection Agency, which will continue the work of the Inspectorate but also be responsible for risk assessment.

Framework legislation in place:

- Law on Plant Protection (19 October 1995);
- Law on the Protection of Plant Varieties and Seed Cultivation (17 September 1996);
- Government Resolution No. 599 "Plant Quarantine Regulations for the Import and Export of Plant and Plant Products to and from Lithuania and their Transit through the Territory of Lithuania" (3 August 1993);
- Government Resolution No. 384 "Plant Quarantine Regulations for Conveyance, Storage, Sale and Usage of Plant and Plant Products in Lithuania (25 March 1996).

(b) Tasks being completed at present

Documents are being prepared with a view to joining the EPPO (European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization). Lithuania is improving the staff and equipment of the Phytosanitary Analysis Centre. Lithuania also is establishing plant quarantine posts which have begun their operations in the country and at border posts.

(c) The remaining tasks

- preparation of regulations and creating of mechanisms of risk assessment.

Improvement of framework legislation:

Lithuania must further conform its import requirements for plant and plant products with international standards. This should take place during the course of 1998-1999. At the same time, Lithuania will be working to improve its infrastructure and laboratories for plant quarantine issues.

The State Plant Quarantine Inspectorate will establish pest free areas in accordance with FAO-IPPC (International Plant Protection Convention) standards. This is expected to take place at the latest by the end of 1999.

Lithuania expects to become a member of the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) in the early part of 1998. Lithuania plans to ratify the IPPC (International Plant Protection Convention) at the latest by the end of 1999.