BELGIAN IMPORT RESTRICTIONS

Annual Report (1960) Submitted by
the Government of Belgium under the
Decision of 3 December 1955

I. Progress accomplished in the elimination of quantitative restrictions

(a) Elimination of restrictions

In 1960, the Belgian Government liberalized imports of a number of agricultural products as of 1 July. It is now in a position to report that quantitative restrictions applicable to the products listed hereunder will be removed with effect from 1 January 1961.

- ex 01.01.a3 - other horses, stallions, mares and geldings.
- ex 02.01.a1 - horseflesh of the species included under 01.01a excluding fresh or chilled foal meat
  - 02.01 b Edible offals, fresh, chilled or frozen
- ex 02.03 - Poultry liver, salted or in brine
- ex 02.05b - Poultry fat, fresh, chilled, frozen, salted or in brine, dried or smoked
  - 02.06 b Edible offals of all kinds (other than poultry liver), salted, in brine, dried or smoked
  - 02.06 c - Dried meat powder
- ex 03.01 - Mackerel, fresh, chilled or frozen
- ex 03.01 - Sea-fish, fresh (live or dead) intended for industrial purposes
- ex 07.01 - The following vegetables when intended for industrial purposes

The Belgian Government has supplied statistics of imports and exports in 1958 and in 1959 of the products covered by the Decision. One copy of the statistics will be forwarded to each contracting party.
- tomatoes
- onions and shallots
- cauliflowers, red cabbage, white cabbage and other cabbage
- spinach
- endive, dandelion, lamb's lettuce and other kinds of lettuce
- carrots
- green peas and beans
- celery and leeks

ex 0701 - the following sub-headings:
  0701 02: "new" potatoes (early season) from 1 January to 25 May inclusive
  07.01 fl: cauliflower, fresh or chilled, from 1 December to 15 April inclusive
  ex 0701 1 la: green peas and beans, fresh or chilled, from 15 April to 31 May

07.02 - Vegetables (whether or not cooked), in frozen state

07.03 - Vegetables provisionally preserved in brine, in sulphur water or in other preservative solutions, but not specially prepared for immediate consumption

07.04 - Dried, dehydrated or evaporated vegetables, whole, cut, sliced, broken or in powder, but not further prepared

ex 08.06 - Apples and pears intended for industrial purposes

ex 08.07 - Peaches, cherries, whitehart cherries, plums intended for industrial purposes

ex 08.08 - Strawberries intended for industrial purposes

08.10 - Fruit (whether or not cooked) preserved by freezing, not containing added sugar

08.11 - Fruit provisionally preserved in brine, in sulphur water or in other preservative solutions, but not specially prepared for immediate consumption

ex 10.01 - Spelt and meslin

ex 15.01 - Non-edible pig fat, rendered or pressed

ex 15.01 - Poultry fat, rendered or pressed

ex 15.03 - Lard oil, not emulsified or mixed or prepared in any way

ex 16.02b - Prepared or preserved meat or meat offals not put up in air-tight containers (except those prepared from foal meat)

(b) Relaxation of restrictions

In the fruit and vegetable sector, imports are subject to seasonal control. However, in order to take the fullest possible account of the interests of exporting countries and of domestic consumers, Belgium has, as in previous years, granted several derogations from the periods of seasonal import prohibition.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of commodity</th>
<th>Periods of import prohibition</th>
<th>Derogations from the prohibition period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Onions</td>
<td>1 June – 28 February</td>
<td>imports resumed as of 1 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinach</td>
<td>1 March – 31 December</td>
<td>imports discontinued as of 6 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>1 June – 15 October</td>
<td>imports discontinued as of 15 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green peas</td>
<td>16 May – 31 August</td>
<td>imports discontinued as of 1 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaches</td>
<td>1 August – 9 September</td>
<td>imports resumed as of 31 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherries</td>
<td>16 May – 15 July</td>
<td>imports discontinued as of 1 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>1 April – 30 June</td>
<td>imports discontinued as of 1 June</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Derogations from the prohibition period are being revised annually in the light of the situation of domestic production.

(e) **Quantitative restrictions**

**Tariff item: ex 01.01 a2 – Foals for slaughter**

The maintenance of this restriction has an economic purpose only, namely to protect the domestic market. Every effort has to be made to prevent unfair competition between veal and foal flesh.

**Tariff items: ex 01.01 a3 – Foals, other**

Belgium is anxious to safeguard the Belgian draught horse breed. Selection for safeguarding the breed has to be made out of a large number of foals. For this reason, adequate outlets have to be found for Belgian foals.

**Tariff item: ex 02.01 a1 – Foal flesh, fresh or chilled**

This restriction is maintained for the same reason as in the case of foals for slaughter. The same remark applies in the case of prepared or preserved foal flesh not put up in airtight containers – ex 16.02 b.

**Tariff item: ex 03.01 – Sea-fish, fresh, intended for the trade, excluding herring, smelt, spratling and mackerel**

Quotas for these products are included in the trade agreements entered into with all countries interested in the Belgian market.

**Tariff item: ex 03.03c – Shrimps in shell**

**Tariff item: 16.05 a – Shrimps, simply boiled and shelled, not prepared or preserved**

Imports for industrial requirements are free. A complete elimination of existing restrictions, however, is not possible at present.
in view of the large number of family labour employed in this sector, particularly in areas periodically affected by structural unemployment.

**Tariff item:** ex 04.01 and ex 04.02 - milk, whole or skimmed; buttermilk, curdled milk, fermented milk, fresh or preserved, not concentrated or sweetened; milk cream, not concentrated or sweetened

ex 04.02 al and ex 04.02 bl - Concentrated milk; milk cream, preserved or concentrated, unsweetened - 04.03 - Butter

Dairy products should be considered in the aggregate, since any special situation obtaining in a given sector requires general action in the entire field.

Inasmuch as butter, being in over-supply represents a very large item in the support policy of Belgium's dairy industry, it is not possible at present to make any change in the existing import regulations in respect of dairy products.

**Tariff items ex 06.03 - Cut flowers and flower buds of a kind suitable for bouquets or for ornamental purposes, fresh**

Owing to considerations of a social nature, it is not possible at this time to entirely liberalize imports of cut flowers.

**Tariff item:** ex 07.01 c3 - Potatoes n.s.m.

The restrictions on potato imports are intended to maintain potato-growing on a sound economic basis and to ensure the possibility of normal crop rotation in certain agricultural areas.

**Tariff item:** ex 07.01 f lb - Cauliflowers, fresh or chilled, intended for the trade, from 16 April to 30 November.

**Tariff item:** ex 07.01 f3 - White cabbage, fresh or chilled, intended for the trade, from 16 June to 28 February.

**Tariff item:** ex 07.01 f3 - Red cabbage, fresh or chilled, intended for the trade, from 16 June to 28 February.

**Tariff item:** ex 07.01 f3 - Cabbage, other, fresh or chilled, intended for the trade, from 1 April to 30 June.

**Tariff item:** ex 07.01 g - Spinach, fresh or chilled, intended for the trade, from 1 April to 15 December.
Tariff item: ex 07.01 h - Endive, fresh or chilled, intended for the trade from 1 April to 31 December.

Tariff item: ex 07.01 k - Carrots, fresh or chilled, intended for the trade, from 1 April to 31 July.

Tariff item: ex 07.01 l lb - Beans, fresh or chilled, intended for the trade, from 1 June to 14 April - Restrictions maintained during the period 16 June - 15 October.

Tariff item: ex 07.01 l lB - Green peas, fresh or chilled, intended for the trade, from 1 June to 14 April. Restrictions maintained during the period 1 June - 31 August.

Tariff item: ex 07.01 0 - Celery, fresh or chilled, intended for the trade.

Tariff item: ex 07.01 0 - Leeks, fresh or chilled, intended for the trade.
Vegetables are to be considered as a whole because market-gardening undertakings generally grow a full range of vegetables and because they represent a socially important group which deserves to be supported.

The same regulations apply in the case of imports of all vegetables which are subject to control: free imports subject to the minimum price arrangement in force within the European Economic Community, and seasonal prohibition on imports from other countries. The periods of import prohibition coincide with the peak availability of domestic crops.

Adjustments in the prohibition periods make it possible to safeguard the interests of the exporting countries and of the domestic producers and importers alike.

**Tariff item: ex 08.06 a** - fresh apples, intended for the trade - restrictions maintained during the period 16 July–15 March.

**Tariff item: ex 08.06 b** - fresh pears, intended for the trade - restrictions maintained during the period 16 July–15 February.

**Tariff item: ex 08.07 b** - fresh peaches, including nectarines; intended for the trade - restrictions maintained during the period 1 August–9 September.

**Tariff item: ex 08.07 c** - fresh cherries, including whiteheart cherries, intended for the trade - restrictions maintained during the period 1 June–15 July.

**Tariff item: ex 08.07 d** - fresh plums, intended for the trade - restrictions maintained during the period 16 July–15 September.

**Tariff item: ex 08.08 b** - fresh strawberries, intended for the trade - restrictions maintained during the period 1 June–30 June.

The remarks concerning vegetables are equally applicable in the case of fruit. Imports in both these sectors are in fact subject to the same regulations.

**Tariff item: ex 10.01** - wheat for sowing, except selected seeds

**Tariff item: ex 10.02** - rye

**Tariff item: ex 10.03** - barley

**Tariff item: ex 10.04** - oats

Imports of selected seeds for seed production are unrestricted. As regards seeds for commercial purposes, the volume of imports is determined in relation to domestic output and to cultivation requirements.
Existing restrictions are dictated by the seed selection policy, the object of which is to raise the quantitative and qualitative productivity of grain farming.

Tariff item: ex 12.04 - sugar-beet, whole or sliced, fresh, dried or powdered

The maintenance of an optimum area planted to sugar-beet is of vital importance for normal crop rotation in certain agricultural areas of the country.

As the normal output of these areas exceeds the requirements of the beet sugar industry for the purpose of supplying the domestic market, no change could be made in the import regulations in respect of this item.

Tariff item: 12.05 - chicory roots, fresh or dried, whole or cut, unroasted

Belgium has always been one of the main exporters of chicory roots.

The area planted to chicory has substantially declined in recent years. In view, however, of the importance of this crop from a sociological standpoint, the maintenance of a minimum area, sufficient to cover domestic requirements and normal export needs, continues to be necessary.

Tariff item: 12.06 - hops (cones and lupulin)

The cultivation of hops employs a large amount of skilled labour. Restrictions are being maintained for social reasons, but they are not such as to encourage an economically unsound expansion of this crop.

Tariff item: ex 02.05 b - pig fat, not pressed or rendered, fresh or smoked

Tariff item: ex 15.01 - lard and other edible pig fat, pressed or rendered

The maintenance of existing restrictions remains necessary to try and secure outlets offering a fair return for these products.

II. Measures aiming at the eventual elimination of quantitative restrictions

The CONTRACTING PARTIES have requested the Belgian Government to examine the possibility of establishing a workable programme for the eventual removal of the remaining quantitative restrictions.

This question was given careful study by the competent authorities, who came to the conclusion that such a programme could not be drawn up at the present time.

The conditions under which Belgian agriculture is operating, both domestically and at the international level, preclude the possibility of drafting a realistic plan of action for the gradual elimination of quantitative restrictions.

The Belgian Government is doing its utmost to meet its obligations towards the GATT, as evidenced by the liberalization measures detailed in the present report. It will endeavour to achieve equal progress in the course of next year.
III. General reasons warranting the continuance of quantitative restrictions

The situation in the Belgian agriculture has not improved over that of the preceding years. The fact that the selling price index of agricultural products has arisen is due to higher prices during the autumn and winter months as a result of the dry weather in the summer of 1959. This rise is purely accidental, as the following table clearly indicates.

On the other hand, the trend of production costs is consistently upward.

Agricultural index 1951-1952 = 100

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1956</th>
<th>1957</th>
<th>1958</th>
<th>1959</th>
<th>July 1960</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Index of selling prices of agricultural products of which:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vegetable products:</td>
<td>90.6</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>91.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>animal products:</td>
<td>96.7</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>113.7</td>
<td>98.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Index of production costs of which:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wages:</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>90.6</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>89.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farm rents:</td>
<td>110.4</td>
<td>114.1</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>133.5</td>
<td>121.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ratio: selling price \times 100 production costs</strong></td>
<td>82.4%</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As was stated in earlier reports, the principal object of the Belgian Government's agricultural policy is to meet domestic demand. In most cases, the restrictions remaining in force are the only means whereby production in certain sectors can to some extent be maintained at a remunerative level.

IV. Non-discriminatory application of quantitative restrictions

All quantitative restrictions were applied, as in the past, in a non-discriminatory manner to imports from GATT countries.

V. Granting of a fair share of the Belgian market

The Belgian Government is convinced that it has granted to exporting countries a fair and reasonable share of the Belgian market.
VI. Conclusion

The Belgian Government is fully conscious of the fact that, notwithstanding the efforts it has exerted with a view to a complete liberalization of trade in agricultural products, a number of commodities are still subject to quantitative restrictions. It wishes to stress that it is its firm intention to persist in its efforts toward the gradual elimination of the remaining restrictions, without even waiting for the publication of its next annual report.

The Belgian Government hopes that the CONTRACTING PARTIES will appreciate the effort accomplished by Belgium, due consideration being given to the internal difficulties encountered by the Belgian agriculture, to the conditions prevailing in the agricultural sector of international trade, as well as to the number of quantitative restrictions which are still being enforced in this sector by most of the contracting parties.