BELGIAN IMPORT RESTRICTIONS
Second Annual Report submitted by the Government of Belgium
under the Decision of 3 December 1955

I. The progress made in the elimination of quantitative restrictions

(a) Elimination of the restrictions

The first report submitted by the Belgian Government mentioned that the Belgian Government intended to eliminate the restrictions one by one rather than relax them gradually.

In this respect, Belgium is in a position to indicate that restrictions applicable to the following products have been eliminated:

50 a Asparagus
50 h3 D Watercress, chervil, parsley

These products can, therefore, be eliminated from the list annexed to the Decision of 3 December 1955.

(b) Relaxation of the restrictions

(i) Seasonal restrictions

In order to limit quantitative restrictions to the strict minimum, derogations from the period of seasonal import prohibitions have been granted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of items</th>
<th>Periods of import prohibition</th>
<th>Derogations from the prohibition period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ex 48</td>
<td>Onions</td>
<td>1 June - 31 January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ex 50 f1</td>
<td>French beans</td>
<td>16 June - 15 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ex 50 f1</td>
<td>Peas</td>
<td>1 June - 31 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59 a</td>
<td>Apples</td>
<td>16 July - 15 March</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Belgian Government has supplied statistics of imports and exports in 1955 and 1956 of the products covered by the Decision. One copy of the statistics will be forwarded to each contracting party. For information provided by the Belgian Government on the measures to be developed for the elimination of the restrictions, see L/640.
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<thead>
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<th>Periods of import prohibition</th>
<th>Derogations from the prohibition period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59 b Pears</td>
<td>16 July - 15 February</td>
<td>Imports discontinued as of 5 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 a2 Peaches</td>
<td>1 August - 9 September</td>
<td>Imports not discontinued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ex 60 b Cherries</td>
<td>1 June - 15 July</td>
<td>Imports discontinued as of 2 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 c Plums</td>
<td>16 July - 15 September</td>
<td>Imports not discontinued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 a1 Strawberries</td>
<td>1 June - 30 June</td>
<td>Imports discontinued as of 2 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 b Melons</td>
<td>1 June - 30 September</td>
<td>Imports discontinued as of 15 June</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These dates which may vary are reviewed every year on the basis of the situation of domestic production.

It is, therefore, not possible to give assurances that the same derogations can be maintained until the full elimination of the quantitative restrictions. Nevertheless, the fact that they were granted when possible demonstrates the spirit in which the Belgian authorities operate the restrictions.

(ii) Quantitative restrictions

**Horses:** Belgian Tariff Item No. 1

The quota for saddle horses available to traders has been increased from 50 head in 1955 to 100 head in 1956 and 150 in 1957. This gradual increase tends towards the full elimination of this import restriction. It has been possible to effect compensated transactions (4,750 horses per year).

**Bovine cattle:** Belgian Tariff Item No. 3

The issue of import licences within the framework of Benelux has been considerably extended in connexion with live-stock improvement.

**Swine:** Belgian Tariff Item No. 6

Prices for swine have remained below the level which can be regarded as economically sound. Therefore it has not been possible to modify the relevant import regulations.

**Beef and Veal:** Belgian Tariff Item No. 13 a1

In contrast with the situation which obtained in previous years, some quantities of beef and veal could be imported directly.
Pork: Belgian Tariff Item No. 13 cl - Bacon: Item No. 17

In view of the particularly difficult position in this sector, it has not been possible to permit the elimination of import restrictions.

Horseflesh: Belgian Tariff Item No. 13 dl

The following quotas have been allocated to importers:

- 500 tons: from 1 May to 31 July 1956
- 1,000 tons: from 15 August to 15 November 1956
- 1,500 tons: from 16 November 1956 to 15 February 1957

This substantial quantitative increase tends towards the elimination of the corresponding restrictions in the near future.

Meat salted, dried, smoked, etc.: Belgian Tariff Item No. 18

This category of meat is subjected to the same regulations as fresh or chilled meat.

Fresh Sprats: Belgian Tariff Item No. 19 b2

Restrictions upon imports from the Netherlands have been eliminated. Furthermore, it has not been possible to modify the existing system.

Fresh Sea Fish: Belgian Tariff Item No. 19 b(3)(4)

Imports of fresh fish are still regulated by agreements with all countries interested in the Belgian market.

Shrimps: Belgian Tariff Item No. 21 a2

Shrimps, unshelled, have been liberalized among the Benelux countries, as from 1 January 1957.

Milk: Belgian Tariff Item No. 22

Milk cream: Belgian Tariff Item No. 23

Butter: Belgian Tariff Item No. 25

Eggs: Belgian Tariff Item No. 27

In 1956, imports of fresh butter from countries other than the Netherlands exceeded 1,000 tons.

Wheat, Barley and Oats for sowing: Belgian Tariff Item Nos: ex 68, ex 71, ex 72

Imports of these items depend on effective needs which vary considerably from year to year.
Sugar Beet: Belgian Tariff Item No. 85

No modification has been made in the regulations applicable to this item.

Chicory Roots: Belgian Tariff Item No. 86

Imports of this item from the Netherlands are not restricted, while imports from other countries vary depending upon the level of prices for chicory roots in the domestic market.

Hops: Belgian Tariff Item No. 87

During the season under consideration it was possible to liberalize imports of this item as from 25 November 1956, in view of the high level which domestic prices reached. However, it is not possible to give assurances that this may be the case again this year.

Lard: Belgian Tariff Item No. 100

A study has been undertaken for the purpose of examining the feasibility of liberalizing this item amongst the Benelux countries.

II. Measures taken to ensure the eventual elimination of the restrictions

The CONTRACTING PARTIES have agreed that the position of Belgium should be appreciated in the light of its contractual obligations as a member of the Benelux union.

With a view to eliminating outstanding restrictions fully, it has been decided to harmonize the agricultural policies of the Benelux countries.

The Working Parties of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Harmonization of Agricultural Policies have, until now, dealt with the following problems:

1. Salaries and Farm Rents

Remuneration of business management and piece-work has been given very close attention. Specific proposals shall be submitted to the Ministers.

As regards farm rents, it has been noted that the harmonization of their levels has been maintained.

2. Fertilisers and Machinery

The Working Party on Fertilisers and Machinery has initiated a study of price disparities concerning fertilisers and machinery as between the three countries. The Working Party is also investigating possible causes for the disparities which have been noted.
3. Marketing

The question has been examined as to what extent market differences between the three countries may hamper the harmonization of their agricultural policies. The Working Party has endeavoured to find an answer to the question as to what extent the systems applicable in the three countries can be reconciled to liberalization.

4. Liberalization

The Working Party on Liberalization has examined the possibility of liberalizing some items. The Working party hopes to be in a position, in the near future, to propose to the Ministers practical measures with a view to achieving such liberalization as regards the following items: potatoes, cauliflowers, cherries, eggs for brooding and day-old chicks.

5. Budget

The three national agricultural budgets and the expenses concerning agriculture provided for in other departmental budgets have been compared from the point of view of their incidence on the harmonization of the agricultural policies of the three countries.

The report which the Committee on the Harmonization of Agricultural Policies is to submit to the session of the ministerial commission to be held in the Autumn of 1957, will make it possible to appreciate the progress achieved in the various sectors.

III. The reasons for the maintenance of the restrictions

The figures listed in the following table show that the situation of Belgian agriculture has hardly improved during the last year.

**Agricultural Indices**

(1951-1952 = 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1956</th>
<th>June 1956</th>
<th>June 1957</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agricultural sales price index</strong></td>
<td>89.2</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which: vegetable products</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>92.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>animal products</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>88.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Production cost index</strong></td>
<td>107.6</td>
<td>110.0</td>
<td>108.7</td>
<td>113.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which: salaries</td>
<td>116.0</td>
<td>118.0</td>
<td>114.5</td>
<td>128.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farm rents</td>
<td>114.7</td>
<td>118.1</td>
<td>117.0</td>
<td>124.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ratio:</strong> Agricultural products x 100</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>78.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>production costs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These few figures demonstrate that agricultural sales prices have remained fairly stable during the period under consideration, whereas cost prices have generally increased.

The reasons which have prompted Belgium to resort to the waiver in the case of quantitative restrictions upon imports of certain agricultural products, have therefore remained unchanged on the whole, and the maintenance of the restrictions concerned is thus justified.

IV. The non-discriminatory application of quantitative restrictions

All quantitative restrictions have been applied in a non-discriminatory manner to imports from GATT countries.

Thus, for instance, the readjustments made in the seasonal restrictions have been applied vis-à-vis all GATT countries.

V. The granting of a fair and reasonable share of the Belgian market

The Belgian Government is convinced that they have granted exporting countries a fair and reasonable share of the Belgian market.