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Multilateral Trade Negotiations

GROUP 3(e) - CONSIDERATION OF TECHNICAL WORK TO BE UNDERTAKEN

Note by the Secretariat

1. The present note has been prepared by the secretariat to assist members of the Group in carrying out the programme of work entrusted to it by the Trade Negotiations Committee (document MTN/2 of 11 February 1974).

2. It is appropriate, no doubt, to distinguish between work that Group 3(e) can carry out alone, and work to be carried out by it in liaison with other groups. The tasks enumerated in paragraphs 3, 4 and 15 fall into the first category; those enumerated in paragraphs 5, 6, 7, 11, 13 and 14 are in the second category. These various tasks will be examined successively.

3. Work under paragraph 3 of document MTN/2

The task entrusted to the Group is that of "bringing up to date and completing the analytical and statistical documentation assembled in the context of the programme of work adopted by the CONTRACTING PARTIES in 1967 in respect of all agricultural products (Chapters 1 to 24 BTN)".

In document MTN/3E/W/1 the secretariat has set forth in tabular form the list of documents assembled to date, indicating the period to which the data pertain. The list does not, in general, include those documents of the Agriculture Committee that have been superseded; it does, on the other hand, contain a selection of other GATT documents considered to be relevant. The list broadly groups the documents to correspond to the various areas of work of the Agriculture Committee.

The work entrusted to the Group, under paragraph 3, requires it to consider:

(a) which of the documents in that list can and must be brought up to date, with the collaboration of the governments that established them;

(b) what complementary information it seems necessary to assemble.

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1 Including analytical and technical work relating to tariffs under the GSP.
4. Work under paragraph 4 of document MTN/2

The work to be done by the Group under this paragraph comprises the "collection of the data for each of the last few years and carrying out an analysis of recent changes in production, consumption and supply of and demand for agricultural products; identification of the problems which result for world agricultural markets and of their significance for an approach to the negotiations in the agricultural sector".

Having regard to the magnitude that this work could represent - and the considerable time that would be needed for its completion - if an extensive interpretation was given to this paragraph, it seems necessary that at the Group's first meeting, it should:

(a) determine which products or product sectors should, in the first instance, be the subject of the statistical and analytical exercise mentioned in the first sentence of paragraph 4;

(b) indicate specifically what data should be collected, and for which years.

It would likewise be useful for the Group to have a preliminary discussion at its first meeting with a view to identifying the problems resulting from recent changes for agricultural markets, and how that is likely to affect the approach to the agricultural negotiations.

5. Work under paragraph 15 of document MTN/2

For the Group's meeting, the secretariat has prepared a report on the work already accomplished in this field (document MTN/3E/W/2).

6. Other work by Group 3(e) in co-operation with other groups

The work described in paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 and the tasks enumerated in paragraphs 11 to 14 imply that some measure of co-ordination is established between Group E and the other groups.

A. Tasks envisaged in paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 of document MTN/2

One may question the desirability for the Group of going into a discussion on the tariffs, base year or unit of account to be used in the negotiations, in the absence of a concurrent - if not simultaneous - discussion of the same topics.
in Group 3(a). In view of the fact that it is probable that the participation and composition of delegations in the two groups will be broadly similar, one might consider the possibility of leaving the points described in paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 of the programme of work for discussion in Groups 3(a) and 3(e) in conjunction with each other.

It would be of interest for Group 3(e) to express an opinion on this subject.

B. As regards the programme of work indicated in paragraphs 11 to 14 concerning the applicability to agricultural products of the rules formulated in respect of certain non-tariff measures, its progress is clearly to some extent conditional on the progress of work in the latter area. In particular, it would seem premature for Group 3(e) to discuss at its first session the problem of the applicability to agricultural products of rules on packaging, labelling, countervailing duties and import documentation. The problem of standards is a different case, first because it is in this area that the discussions have been most detailed, but also because sanitary and phytosanitary regulations assuredly fall within the definition of standards given in document COM.IND/W/108. Accordingly, one can say that in resuming the work already undertaken on sanitary regulations, the Group is at the same time dealing with the question of applicability to agricultural products, in part if not in its totality, of solutions elaborated in the field of standards.