Introduction

1. The International Meat Consultative Group held its sixth meeting on 15 and 16 November 1976. The following countries or groups of countries were represented (a list of participants was circulated in document IMCG/INF/4):

- Argentina
- Australia
- Austria
- Brazil
- Bulgaria
- Canada
- Columbia
- Egypt
- European Communities (and their Member States)
- Finland
- Gabon
- Hungary
- Japan
- Malta
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Poland
- Romania
- South Africa
- Spain
- Switzerland
- United States
- Uruguay
- Yugoslavia

In addition, representatives of the ECE, the FAO, the OECD and UNCTAD attended the meeting as observers.

Agenda

2. The Group adopted as the basis for its discussions the topics outlined in the airgramme convening the meeting (GATT/AIR/1325) with the addition of an item for other business.

Consultations

3. In accordance with the procedure adopted at its previous meetings the Group consulted on current market conditions and foreseeable trends in international trade in bovine meat and live cattle. In this regard the Group had before it an up-dated
secretariat summary relating to the main aggregates of production and trade (document IMCG/W/15/Rev.2), an up-dated table of prices practised in international trade (document IMCG/W/23/Rev.1), and the replies of participants to the model questionnaire.

4. As a variation of the procedure adopted at previous meetings of the Group, the opportunity was taken to exchange views and to pose questions with respect to participants' assessments of the market situation and outlook in the order in which they were presented. This was followed by the usual exchange of views and discussion on the overall market situation and outlook. It was considered that this procedure had given a useful focus to the Group's consultations. It was accordingly suggested that the Group might follow the same procedure at its next meeting and that the presence of representatives from capitals would facilitate the work of the Group in this regard.

5. It was not considered necessary for the Group at this stage in the development of its consultative process to attempt to draw conclusions. Consistent with the early-warning function of the Group it was sufficient that the impressions gained from the consultations should be taken into account by participants in their further decision-making in capitals and in their preparations for the next meeting of the Group.

6. To facilitate reflection by participants on the matters raised and the views expressed in the consultations it was agreed that statements made by participants would, if they so wished, be reproduced and circulated by the secretariat. The following statements are being circulated:

- Australia IMCG/W/29
- New Zealand IMCG/W/30
- European Communities IMCG/W/31
- United States IMCG/W/32
- Canada IMCG/W/33

7. In the course of its discussions views were exchanged on the nature and scope of the matters which, having regard to the terms of reference of the Group, should form the subject of its consultations. In this connexion the Group confirmed the understandings agreed to at its first meeting, as recorded in paragraphs 6 to 8 of document 1/4167, with respect to the nature and scope of the activities on which, in the initial stages of the Group's work, it would be appropriate to concentrate.

8. Proposal concerning background notes by the secretariat

The representative of Australia outlined in greater detail the proposal put forward at the last meeting of the Group that the secretariat prepare short-term outlook papers for future meetings of the Group which would be based on
information supplied in response to the questionnaire, country statements furnished by participants, and based also on background information which might be drawn from work done by other organizations such as the OECD and the FAO. Following the discussion of this proposal and of a number of related suggestions, it was agreed that interested participants would meet with the Chairman at an early date to draw up a revised proposal which would then be circulated to all participants for their consideration and with a view to reaching a decision on the matter at the next meeting of the Group.

Replies to the model questionnaire

9. Updated replies to the model questionnaire were received from the following participants either prior to or at the meeting: Australia, European Communities, Japan, New Zealand, Romania, Switzerland and the United States. In addition a new reply to the model questionnaire was received from Malta bringing the total number of countries supplying information to eighteen including the European Communities.

10. It was agreed that participants should continue to employ their best endeavours to submit replies to the model questionnaire, together with replies relating to the most recent quarter for which data or estimates are available, sufficiently in advance of meetings of the Group in order that there can be an informed and meaningful discussion of the current market situation and foreseeable trends based on prior analysis of the information. It was also agreed that the secretariat would again prepare and issue a summary relating to the main aggregates of production and trade.

11. For the purposes of the next meeting participants are invited to submit updated replies to the secretariat before 11 March 1977.

Prices practised in international trade

12. The Group took note of the monthly data on prices supplied by a number of participants and reproduced in document IMCG/W/23/Rev.1. It was agreed that this document should be up-dated for the next meeting of the Group on the basis of additional information to be supplied by the participants concerned, viz., Argentina, Australia, the European Communities, New Zealand and Uruguay. It was also suggested that consideration might be given to improving the coverage of the monthly price data collected, particularly as regards transactions in markets other than the principal markets.
Other business

13. The Group was advised that the International Meat Office (OPIC), a non-governmental organization, had made a further request for observer status in the Group. In this regard the Group confirmed its earlier decision concerning the intergovernmental status of the Group (IMCG/2, paragraph 6). However, it was noted that this decision did not preclude the possibility that the Group might decide to invite a non-governmental organization to attend a meeting of the Group for a particular purpose.

Date of next meeting

14. Subject to confirmation, the Consultative Group will hold its next meeting on 28 and 29 March 1977.