



**Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

**REPORT ON THE USE OF THE SPS E-AGENDA FOR THE 25-26 JUNE SPS COMMITTEE MEETING**

NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT<sup>1</sup>

1.1. The SPS Committee held its 77<sup>th</sup> regular meeting on 25-26 June 2020. Delegates were able to attend in person, as well as via a virtual platform ([JOB/SPS/8/Add.1](#)). The regular SPS Committee meeting also involved a written procedure, using the new online eAgenda platform for the first time.<sup>2</sup> Here below are summarized some key numbers of the use of eAgenda in June 2020:

- 139 users from 51 Members and 1 observer government
- 52 agenda points added through eAgenda
- 17 new and 12 previous STCs raised through eAgenda
- 21 Members uploaded 91 statements before the Committee meeting

1.2. By way of background, the eAgenda project was launched in 2019, with the support of the WTO IT Solutions Division, for use by both the SPS and TBT Committees, building on the existing online notifications systems (SPS/TBT NSSs) and Information Management Systems (SPS/TBT IMSs). In February 2020, nine Members<sup>3</sup> took part in the pilot-test phase of the SPS eAgenda, in preparation for the March 2020 SPS Committee meetings, subsequently cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>4</sup> The Secretariat thanks the participating Members for their comments that helped to correct technical issues, and contributed to the continuous improving of the system, facilitating its implementation for the June meeting.

1.3. For the June SPS Committee meeting, Members had the possibility to add points to the agenda, raise and support specific trade concerns (STCs), and to upload statements through the SPS eAgenda platform, following the procedure outlined in [JOB/SPS/7](#). The procedure was adapted from the one used by the TBT Committee in its 13-14 May 2020 written STC procedure ([JOB/TBT/365](#)), undertaken through the TBT eAgenda. Lessons learnt from the TBT procedure and the ability to resolve technical issues in real-time contributed to the success of the meeting.

1.4. The written procedure consisted of three phases: a first phase for submission of points ("interventions" in eAgenda terminology) and STCs for inclusion in the agenda; a second phase for supporting or withdrawing STCs; and a third phase to continue uploading statements, which had also already been possible during the first two phases. A total of 139 users requested access to the SPS eAgenda before the end of phase 1 (10 June 2020). These represented 51 Members (plus five EU member States), one observer government and one international intergovernmental organization with observer status. Of these, 41 users requested read-only access while the rest requested full drafting rights. The number of users per delegation ranged from one to 14, including both capital-and Geneva-based officials. After phase 1, sixteen additional users requested access. As of 21 July 2020, the total number of users is 155, representing 57 Members (plus five EU member States), one observer government and one international intergovernmental organization with observer status.

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<sup>1</sup> This document has been prepared under the Secretariat's own responsibility and is without prejudice to the positions of Members or to their rights and obligations under the WTO.

<sup>2</sup> Members can access the eAgenda platform from: <https://eagenda.wto.org/members/>.

<sup>3</sup> The following Members participated in the pilot-test phase: Canada, Colombia, Indonesia, Paraguay, Senegal, South Africa, Chinese Taipei, Ukraine and the United States.

<sup>4</sup> See document [JOB/SPS/5/Rev.1/Corr.1](#).

1.5. In order to set up a single sign-in system across all WTO accounts, users with a DocsOnLine/DORA account were invited to use the same credentials to access the eAgenda platforms. Twenty-four users already had access to the TBT eAgenda and could log on using the same credentials.

1.6. A user guide, available in the three WTO working languages from the eAgenda platform, was specifically developed for the June 2020 SPS Committee meeting to help Members get started using the platform. Besides, the Secretariat provided virtual training upon request to familiarize delegations with the use of the platform.<sup>5</sup>

1.7. A total of 52 interventions were added to eAgenda prior to the meeting, including 17 new and 12 previous STCs raised by 20 Members and supported by 23 Members through eAgenda. In addition, one STC that had been included in the agenda was withdrawn before the Committee meeting. Overall, 21 Members uploaded their statements on STCs using eAgenda.

1.8. Apart from STCs, other points were added to eAgenda under the following agenda items: Information sharing (10); Pest and disease-free areas (regionalization) (4); Monitoring of the use of international standards (1 new issue and 2 previously raised); Cross-cutting issues (4); and Technical assistance (2).

1.9. In addition, at the beginning of the meeting, several Members requested the inclusion of new interventions under Information sharing, Pest and disease-free areas (regionalization) and Cross-cutting issues, which were subsequently added to the eAgenda by the Secretariat, to ensure that the platform represented a complete repository of information.

1.10. In the drafting of the summary report, the Secretariat relied on statements submitted by Members, mainly through the eAgenda, but also by email. Statements provided by email were subsequently added to the eAgenda. For the time being, for items other than STCs, all Members' interventions are displayed at the same level, without differentiating between the Members raising the interventions and the Members making statements on the raised interventions.

1.11. Regarding the procedure, [JOB/SPS/7](#) set deadlines for uploading statements for Members raising and supporting concerns (3 July 2020) and for Members maintaining measures subject to an STC and all other items (10 July 2020). However, given that the eAgenda could not technically differentiate the two deadlines, some statements from Members raising and supporting STCs were uploaded after the 3 July deadline. Given the circumstances, these statements have been taken into account in the summary report, with a footnote indicating that they were submitted after the deadline.

1.12. In terms of next steps, the SPS Committee will hold an informal consultation on 16 September 2020 (date to be confirmed) where Members will have the opportunity to provide further feedback on the use of the eAgenda, and on the overall procedures used for the June meeting. In the meantime, the eAgenda platform will be updated, when technically possible, taking into account the feedback provided by Members during: (i) the pilot-test phase; (ii) the June 2020 Committee meeting; and (iii) the May 2020 TBT Committee meeting held by written procedure.<sup>6</sup> In particular, the inclusion of the following new features will be considered: (i) replicating the structure available for the STCs to all other agenda items to allow differentiation between Members raising an intervention and those taking the floor under the corresponding item (see paragraph 1.10 above); and (ii) downloading of statements; among others.

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<sup>5</sup> Training requests and/or further information on the eAgenda can be addressed to [spscommittee@wto.org](mailto:spscommittee@wto.org).

<sup>6</sup> The TBT Committee held an informal meeting on 12 June 2020 to receive feedback on the use of the TBT eAgenda at the TBT Committee meeting held by written procedure in May 2020. Feedback received is summarized in document [JOB/TBT/367](#).