

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

**PROPOSED RECOMMENDED PROCEDURE FOR AD HOC CONSULTATIONS
OR NEGOTIATIONS AMONG MEMBERS UNDER
THE SPS AGREEMENT (ARTICLE 12.2)**

Note by the Secretariat¹

INTRODUCTION

1. The Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures ("the Agreement") mandates the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary ("the Committee") to encourage and facilitate ad hoc consultations or negotiations among Members on specific sanitary or phytosanitary issues, according to Article 12.2.
2. The Working Procedures of the Committee (G/SPS/1), adopted by the Committee at its first regular meeting in March 1995, establishes that "[w]ith respect to any matter which has been raised under the Agreement, the Chairperson may, at the request of the Members directly concerned, assist them in dealing with the matter in question".²
3. In accordance with Article 12.7 of the Agreement, the Committee has carried out two reviews of the operation and implementation of the Agreement to date. In both Reviews, the Committee recognized the usefulness of the application of Article 12.2 to assist Members to reach mutually satisfactory solutions regarding sanitary and phytosanitary issues.³ In the Second Review of the operation and implementation of the Agreement, Members were encouraged to "make use of the possibility for ad hoc consultations, including through the good offices of the Chairperson of the SPS Committee, to facilitate the resolution of specific trade concerns".⁴
4. To date, the good offices of the Chairperson has been used on three occasions.⁵

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

² G/SPS/1, paragraph 6.

³ G/SPS/12, paragraph 24, and G/SPS/36, paragraphs 87-88.

⁴ G/SPS/36, paragraph 88.

⁵ By Argentina, Brazil, Chile, South Africa and Uruguay with respect to measures relating to citrus canker taken by the European Communities, in March 1998 (G/SPS/GEN/204/Rev.9/Add.3, paras. 155-158); by the United States with respect to restrictions on wheat and oilseeds maintained by Poland, in November 1998 (G/SPS/GEN/204/Rev.9/Add.2, paras. 551-552); and by Canada with respect to import restrictions on bovine semen maintained by India, in March 2001 (G/SPS/GEN/204/Rev.9/Add.2, paras. 370-378).

5. With a view to provide further guidance to Members on the procedure for ad hoc consultations according to Article 12.2, Argentina and the United States each circulated a proposal for the Committee's consideration.⁶ Subsequently, both Members introduced a joint proposal⁷, which is the basis for the "Recommended Procedure for Ad Hoc Consultations and Negotiations Among Members under the SPS Agreement (Article 12.2)" below, which also takes into account other Members' comments and suggestions.

⁶ Argentina's proposal was circulated in March 2008, as document G/SPS/W/219. The United States' proposal was circulated in June 2008, as document G/SPS/W/227.

⁷ G/SPS/W/233.

**RECOMMENDED PROCEDURE FOR AD HOC CONSULTATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS
AMONG MEMBERS UNDER THE SPS AGREEMENT (ARTICLE 12.2)**

Proposed Decision by the Committee

The Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures ("the Committee"),

Having regard to paragraph 1 of Article 12 of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures ("the Agreement");

Seeking to further encourage and facilitate ad hoc consultations or negotiations among Members on specific sanitary and phytosanitary issues, in accordance with the provisions of Article 12.2 of the Agreement;

Recalling that the Working Procedures of the Committee calls on the Chairperson of the Committee to assist Members to deal with any matter which has been raised under the Agreement, upon a request by the Members directly concerned;

Recalling that during the reviews of the operation and implementation of the Agreement, Members recognized the usefulness of application of Article 12.2, and encouraged the use of ad hoc consultations, including through the good offices of the Chairperson of the Committee, to facilitate the resolution of specific trade concerns;

Taking into account the ongoing negotiations of the Doha Development Agenda;

Decides as follows:

1. This procedure is intended to encourage and facilitate ad hoc consultations or negotiations among Members on specific sanitary or phytosanitary issues, with a view to assist Members to reach mutually satisfactory solutions, according to Article 12.2 of the Agreement.
2. This procedure does not add to nor detract from the existing rights and obligations of Members under the Agreement nor any other WTO Agreement. This procedure does not provide any legal interpretation or modification to the Agreement itself and is without prejudice to the right of a Member to determine its appropriate level of sanitary or phytosanitary protection against risks to human, animal or plant life or health.
3. This procedure is not intended to prejudice in any way the process or outcome of the work of other Committees, including the work those Committees are doing related to the Doha Development Agenda.

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

4. Any Member may at any time request consultations regarding any sanitary and phytosanitary measure(s) or related technical issue(s) falling under the scope of the Agreement.
5. Member participation in consultations is voluntary.
6. The decision of whether to participate in consultations, and all positions taken by Members during such consultations, will be without prejudice to the rights or obligations of a Member under the WTO Agreements.

7. The consulting Members, as well as the Chairperson of the Committee and the Secretariat when involved, will treat as confidential the information submitted and positions taken during consultations, unless disclosure is consented to by the consulting Members.

8. The Members agree that consultations will be held in good faith.

II. PROCEDURE FOR ADDRESSING CONCERNS REGARDING SPS ISSUES

Step A: Request for Consultations

9. A Member (the "requesting Member") must request consultations with another Member (the "responding Member") in writing. The request will: (1) refer to the measure(s) or technical issue(s) to be consulted on; and (2) state the reasons for requesting consultations as well as any preliminary questions and concerns regarding the measure(s) or technical issue(s), including possible effects on trade, as well as, if any, relevant provision(s) of the Agreement and existing international standards, guidelines or recommendations adopted by the pertinent international organizations as referred to in the Agreement. In addition to sending the request to the responding Member, the requesting Member will send the request to the Secretariat and the Chairperson of the Committee on the same day as the request is made.

Step B: Response to a Request

10. The responding Member will notify the requesting Member in writing whether it accepts or rejects the request within 30 days of receiving the request. The responding Member will also send the response to the Secretariat and the Chairperson of the Committee on the same day as the response is made.

Step C: Consultation Procedure

11. Where the responding Member has accepted the consultations request, the consulting Members shall set a date within 45 days of accepting the request for the consultations for a meeting.

12. The role of the Chairperson of the Committee (or designee thereof) is to facilitate communication between the consulting Members. In that regard, the Chairperson of the Committee (or designee thereof) will consult with both Members regarding the parameters of the consultations, including, but not limited to:

- (a) whether it is recommended that technical experts of each consulting Member should be present at the consultations;
- (b) whether production of written responses and supplementary questions are desirable; and
- (c) whether a mutually acceptable schedule for such submissions and for further meetings, if necessary, can be determined.

13. At no time may the Chairperson of the Committee (or designee thereof) opine on a technical issue or on the consistency with any WTO Agreement, including the Agreement, of a measure(s) or a consulting Member's position on a technical issue(s).

14. Where a consulting Member identifies a standard, guideline, or recommendation of Codex Alimentarius Commission, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), or the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the consulting Members may jointly request the participation of the secretariat of the organization whose standard, guideline, or recommendation has been invoked to explain the scope or content of that standard, guideline, or recommendation.

15. The consulting Members will endeavour to complete the consultations within a reasonable period of time.

16. When either one or both of the consulting Members wish to conclude the consultations, the Member(s) may do so through written notification to the other consulting Member at any time. The Member or Members (if acting jointly) will promptly provide written notification to the Secretariat and the Chairperson of the Committee (or designee thereof) that the consultations have concluded.

17. At the conclusion of the consultations, with approval from both Members, the Chairperson of the Committee will report the general outcome of the consultations to the Committee in accordance with the established working procedures of the Committee.⁸ The report will not contain confidential information unless both consulting Members consent to the inclusion of such information as described in paragraph 7.

III. MONITORING

18. The Secretariat will monitor the use of this procedure, and, in accordance with paragraph 7, will ensure that the Secretariat's conclusions of such monitoring are reflected in the summary of Specific Trade Concerns that the Secretariat annually provides to the Committee (G/SPS/GEN/204).

IV. REVIEW AND DURATION

19. This procedure will be reviewed periodically and revised as necessary by the Committee in light of experience gained through its application. The Committee should undertake a first review of these guidelines not later than two years after their adoption by the Committee and thereafter as the need arises.

⁸ G/SPS/1, paragraph. 6.