

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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ACTIVITIES IN OTHER ORGANS OF GATT

Note by the Secretariat

1. At their twenty-fifth session the CONTRACTING PARTIES agreed that the Committee on Trade and Development should, inter alia, "follow closely the work in progress in other organs of GATT, such as the Committee on Trade in Industrial Products and the Agriculture Committee, and make appropriate suggestions so that in investigating possible lines of action and seeking solutions these organs give early and adequate attention to questions of special concern to developing countries" (L/3155, paragraph 7). The following is a brief account of the current activities of some of these organs.

Committee on Trade in Industrial Products

2. The Committee was set up by the CONTRACTING PARTIES at their twenty-fourth session to explore the opportunities for making progress towards further liberalization of trade. At its meeting in October 1968 the Committee discussed the organization of further work on the inventory of non-tariff and para-tariff barriers to trade, and received a progress report on the analysis of the post-Kennedy Round tariff situation under way in the secretariat.

3. Regarding the inventory of non-tariff trade barriers it was agreed that there should be an examination of all the trade barriers notified by contracting parties and that the examination would be by types of barriers and not on a country-by-country basis. On the instructions of the Committee the secretariat subsequently issued a revised version of the inventory classifying the barriers into six groups (cf. the annex to L/3083). At a meeting in December the Committee decided to examine each of the groups in turn and the next meeting of the Committee, proposed for early February, will begin examination of the first group of barriers.

4. It may be noted that although the revised inventory has been circulated there is no time-limit for the submission of additional notifications by governments. It has been recognized that it would be particularly desirable if the developing countries provided further information on any non-tariff trade barriers affecting their exports.

5. With regard to the study of the tariff situation as it would be when all concessions resulting from the Kennedy Round negotiations had been implemented the Committee examined a secretariat note on the progress made in the preparation of basic documentation (COM.IND/5) and set up a group of technical experts to advise on the presentation of the information collected. The secretariat is currently engaged in the processing of the data on the tariffs of certain developed countries and the intention is to circulate the basic data for the principal developed countries by the end of January 1969. A meeting of the Committee has been proposed for mid-February to discuss the data and further work based on it.

Agriculture Committee

6. Shortly after it was set up at the twenty-fourth session of the CONTRACTING PARTIES, the Agriculture Committee established a programme for the implementation of its terms of reference comprising three stages, namely:

- (i) the assembly of documentation;
- (ii) the identification of the principal problems; and
- (iii) discussion of the means whereby mutually acceptable solutions could be achieved.

The Committee also agreed that while all agricultural products important in international trade would fall within its purview, the information to be collected at the initial stage should relate to: dairy products, cereals, beef and veal, other meats and meat products, fruit and vegetables, oilseeds and vegetable oils, tobacco, and wine (COM.AG/9).

7. By October 1968 the Committee, having received replies to a questionnaire from a considerable number of its members, agreed that with the assembly of documentation the first stage of its work programme had been concluded and that the second stage - that of identifying the principal problems in agriculture - could be started. While the discussion at this stage would of necessity entail reference to specific commodity problems, the Committee would focus its attention on general classes of problems which characterized most of agricultural trade and production.

8. It was agreed that the Committee would examine: (a) the structure of international markets for the eight commodity sectors and the repercussions on international markets of the various measures and mechanisms influencing exports and imports, including export subsidies, export pricing practices, non-commercial export transactions and trade barriers such as quantitative restrictions, tariffs, levies and minimum import price requirements, and (b) the general orientation of production policies, the measures by which the orientation was effected and the concept and level of overall support and impact of production policies upon the markets. A programme of studies in connexion with this stage of the Committee's work is set out in COM.AG/11.

9. On the assumption that the studies will be completed in time, the Agriculture Committee will hold two working sessions some time later to discuss successively the two aspects, namely "international markets" and "production policies".

10. It has also been decided by the CONTRACTING PARTIES that the Agriculture Committee should have the task of considering appropriate procedures for the notifications and consultations in respect of surplus disposals.

Special Group on Tropical Products

11. The Special Group held three meetings in 1968 and discussed the nature and scope of its future work. At their twenty-fifth session the CONTRACTING PARTIES requested the Group to continue its task of exploring ways and means of resolving problems in this field on a commodity-by-commodity basis, taking into account the work done in other international bodies. The secretariat has communicated with a number of developing countries not members of GATT with a view to ascertaining their interest in the consultations being planned and in taking part in the work of the Group.

Working Party on Border Tax Adjustment

12. Since its establishment by the Council in March 1968 the Working Party has held a number of meetings, at which it has heard general statements from delegations, conducted a preliminary examination of the GATT rules on the subject, and made a country-by-country examination of border tax adjustment practices on the basis of information submitted by governments. Developed countries were requested to supply special information on a short list of products of interest to the developing countries.

13. At the next meeting of the Working Party - probably late January - the examination of point 1(b) of its terms of reference, i.e. border tax practices, should be completed. A further meeting might be held in the first half of March to take up point 1(c) of the terms of reference, i.e. trade effects of border tax adjustments.

United Kingdom Import Deposit Scheme

14. The Working Party set up to investigate this matter held a first meeting on 9 December to hear a presentation of the United Kingdom position. Subsequently, it was decided that the CONTRACTING PARTIES should consult with the International Monetary Fund in accordance with Article XV of the General Agreement. An invitation has been sent to the IMF and the Working Party will be reconvened when the Fund is ready to provide a report.

Committee on Anti-Dumping Practices

15. The Agreement on the Implementation of Article VI incorporating the Anti-Dumping Code drawn up in the course of the Kennedy Round negotiations entered into force on 1 July 1968. At the twenty-fifth session the CONTRACTING PARTIES established a Committee on Anti-Dumping Practices as foreseen in the Code. At its first meeting held in November 1968 the Committee adopted a work programme providing for a special meeting to be held in February 1969 to examine changes made in national legislation resulting from adoption of the Code, and the holding of its annual meeting in September 1969.