

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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PARTICIPATION IN THE WORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL MEAT CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Note by the Secretariat

Introduction

1. The present note has been prepared in accordance with the decision of the International Meat Consultative Group at its first meeting, held in Geneva on 13 and 14 March 1975, that the existence of the International Meat Consultative Group be drawn to the attention of countries interested in international trade in meat, including in particular those member countries of the United Nations which are not also members of the GATT, in order that any such country wishing to participate in the Consultative Group might be invited to do so.

Establishment of the International Meat Consultative Group

2. The International Meat Consultative Group was established by the GATT Council of Representatives, acting on a proposal by Australia, on 7 February 1975.

3. The proposal by Australia to establish an International Meat Consultative Group is outlined in a statement contained in GATT document L/4119 dated 26 November 1974 and is reproduced in Appendix A to the present note. The minutes of the meeting of the GATT Council of Representatives at which the proposal to establish the Group was considered and ultimately adopted are contained in GATT documents C/M/101 dated 18 November 1974, C/M/102 dated 12 December 1974, and C/M/103 dated 18 February 1975. Copies of the relevant sections of these Council minutes may be obtained on request from the secretariat by non-GATT member countries.

Terms of reference

4. The International Meat Consultative Group was established by the GATT Council of Representatives with the following terms of reference:

"The Group shall provide continuing opportunities for appropriate intergovernmental consultations on international trade in meat and cattle and shall make such studies of the world situation in meat and cattle, as it sees fit, having regard especially to the desirability of providing regular

accurate information regarding the supply and demand position and of its probable development. For this purpose the Group shall, as necessary, arrange for the collection and dissemination of appropriate information making use of existing sources so far as practicable.

"The Group shall not be a forum for negotiation or for resolving specific bilateral problems in trade in meat and cattle.

"The Group should in no way prejudice the work of the multilateral trade negotiations on meat and cattle."

Membership of the Group

5. Membership of the International Meat Consultative Group is open to all countries interested in international trade in meat and wishing to participate in the Consultative Group.

First meeting of the Group

6. The Group held its first meeting, under the chairmanship of Mr. W.J. Falconer (New Zealand), on 13 and 14 March 1975. The airgram convening the meeting (GATT/AIR/1148) and the Chairman's note summarizing the main points of the meeting (document L/4167) are reproduced respectively in Appendices B and C to the present note. The countries or groups of countries which were represented at the meeting are listed in paragraph 1 of the Chairman's note.

Next meeting of the Group

7. The next meeting of the International Meat Consultative Group will be held in Geneva in June 1975 or shortly before then on a date to be fixed by the Chairman in consultation with participating countries. At this next meeting the Group, in addition to further considering organizational matters, will consult on current market conditions and foreseeable trends in international trade in bovine meat and cattle.

Invitation to participate in the future meetings of the Group

8. In accordance with the decision of the Group at its first meeting, countries interested in international trade in meat, both members and non-members of GATT, wishing to participate in the future meetings of the International Meat Consultative Group, and which have not already done so, are invited to advise the GATT secretariat of their intention to participate.

9. Correspondence relating to any matter dealt with in this note should be addressed to: The Secretariat, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

APPENDIX A

AUSTRALIA - PROPOSED INTERNATIONAL MEAT CONSULTATIVE GROUP

The following statement was circulated at the request of the Australian Mission in document L/4119 dated 26 November 1974.

Recent events point to the need for greater stability and predictability in world trade in meat.

Every effort should be made to avoid the situation where either exporters or importers take unilateral and abrupt action which cuts across on the one hand, importers' interests in assured and stable supplies of meat and, on the other, exporters' interests in having assured and predictable access to world markets - at prices which are fair and reasonable to producers and consumers alike.

Clearly, production and trade in meat will continue to fluctuate sharply from time to time, often for unpredictable and uncontrollable reasons.

Nevertheless, Australia believes that a great deal more can be done, and should be done, in an endeavour to bring about a more reasonable balance between supply and demand on a basis which will assure adequate supplies of meat to consumers and markets to producers at equitable prices and which will achieve a long-term equilibrium between production and consumption.

The experiences of the last two to three years amply demonstrate that the hardship caused by severe shortages of burdensome surpluses of meat and excessive price fluctuations are harmful to both producers and consumers.

Australia believes that a major multilateral cooperative effort is called for in an endeavour to avoid repeating the extremes of recent experience.

We believe that closer cooperation between producers and consumers, based on the concept of exchange of information and consultations, would make an important contribution to attaining this objective.

We must seek to keep one another informed, consult with each other on what we are doing and, in so far as it is practical, as to what we are proposing to do.

We believe that if governments had a better understanding of the world meat market, in all its ramifications, then the decisions they take bearing on the growth and development of their meat industries would be more enlightened and more likely to have regard to the impact their actions may have on their trading partners, whether they be exporters or importers.

This is not to say that if such a co-operative effort had already been in existence, we would have been spared the difficulties which have arisen of late in respect of meat. We do consider, however, that the emerging situation could have been anticipated somewhat more effectively and corrective action set in train earlier, this would have reduced the intensity of the problems which have arisen.

Against this background, Australia believes that it would be appropriate to establish a forum, under an intergovernmental umbrella, in which countries with a substantial interest in the production or consumption of, or trade in meat, could have a continuing and meaningful exchange on recent and prospective developments in the world meat market. Such a group, which might be referred to as the International Meat Consultative Group, is seen as covering a wide range of meats, but initially concentrating on the bovine sector.

In bringing forward this proposal, Australia is very much encouraged by the useful and constructive work which other international commodity groups have done in the area of exchange of information, co-operation and consultation. There are a number of examples, such as the Advisory Sub-Committee on market conditions, which meets under the auspices of the International Wheat Council. The work of the International Lead and Zinc Study Group affords another example of what is in mind.

It has been Australia's experience that the exchange of information which takes place in these settings and the discussion which ensues, together with the close personal relationships which are developed between senior government and industry advisers have generated an atmosphere of understanding and constructive co-operation.

It is emphasized that any such group would not be a negotiating forum, nor a forum for resolving bilateral problems in trade in meat.

We appreciate that there are already existing international organizations which concern themselves with meat, e.g. FAO and OECD. It is our view, however, that such organizations, for a variety of reasons, (such as composition, the particular emphasis of their work, nature of operations, etc.) are not equipped to do the particular task envisaged. At the same time, however, careful attention would need to be given to avoid duplicating the work of such organizations, the group could, of course, very well draw on the work of such organizations, providing for a process of review and consultation at a senior, official policy level (also involving industry advisers).

There is a parallel in the cereals field.. The FAO has a group on grains (as it has on meat). Yet the advisory sub-committee on market conditions carries out its work under the International Wheat Council in many ways similar to that envisaged for the proposed Meat Consultative Group. The IWC and FAO have a close liaison and co-operation in their respective spheres.

Recognizing that the basic thrust of the group's work would be on trade, we would see such a group being established under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The GATT Working Party on Dairy Products might be regarded as an example of how a commodity group can be established within the framework of the GATT. Consideration would, of course, need to be given to making appropriate arrangements for participation by all interested parties.

The question arises as to the association of any group so formed with the prospective Multilateral Trade Negotiations (MTN). In this connexion, Australia is anxious to ensure that any group which is established does have some permanence about it, rather than being dependent for its continuing existence on a round of international trade negotiations. Clearly the formation of such a body within the GATT framework could ultimately facilitate its association with the MTN.

We are convinced that it is in the real interests of both producers and consumers of meat that importing and exporting countries should work more closely together in an endeavour to understand and anticipate the difficulties that inevitably arise from time to time in the world meat trade. The proposal now being brought forward, if implemented, would, we believe, contribute significantly to this end.

Against background of the above, Australia proposes the following draft broad Terms of Reference for any such group¹:

"The Group shall provide continuing opportunities for appropriate intergovernmental consultations on international trade in meat and shall make such studies of the world situation in meat, as it sees fit, having regard especially to the desirability of providing regular accurate information regarding the supply and demand position and of its probable development. For this purpose the Group shall, as necessary, arrange for the collection and dissemination of appropriate information making use of existing sources so far as practicable."

¹For the Terms of Reference with which the Group was established by the Council of Representatives, see paragraph 4 of the present note.

APPENDIX B

GATT/AIR/1148

26 FEBRUARY 1975

SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL MEAT CONSULTATIVE GROUP

1. THE INTERNATIONAL MEAT CONSULTATIVE GROUP, ESTABLISHED BY THE COUNCIL ON 7 FEBRUARY 1975 WITH THE TERMS OF REFERENCE SET OUT IN DOCUMENT C/W/255, WILL HOLD ITS FIRST MEETING ON 13 MARCH 1975 IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE VILLA LE BOCAÏE COMMENCING AT 3 P.M. AND CONTINUING IF NECESSARY ON THE AFTERNOON OF 14 MARCH 1975.
2. AS AGREED BY THE COUNCIL (C/M/103) THE GROUP IS OPEN TO ALL COUNTRIES INTERESTED IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN MEAT AND WISHING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP. SUCH COUNTRIES ARE ACCORDINGLY INVITED TO INFORM THE SECRETARIAT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE OF THE NAMES OF THEIR REPRESENTATIVES WHO WILL ATTEND THE MEETING OF THE GROUP.
3. IT IS SUGGESTED THAT, INTER ALIA, THE GROUP MIGHT WISH TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING MATTERS AT THIS MEETING:
 - (A) THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE ACTIVITIES ON WHICH, IN THE INITIAL STAGES OF ITS WORK, IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO CONCENTRATE;
 - (B) THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE DATA REQUIRED TO ENABLE THE GROUP TO CARRY OUT ITS FUNCTIONS, AND THE PROCEDURES FOR ITS COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION HAVING REGARD TO THE AVAILABILITY OF SUCH DATA FROM EXISTING SOURCES;
 - (C) THE FREQUENCY OF FUTURE MEETINGS;
 - (D) THE GROUP'S RELATIONS WITH INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS OR BODIES INTERESTED IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN MEAT.

O. LONG

APPENDIX C

INTERNATIONAL MEAT CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Note by Chairman

Introduction

1. The International Meat Consultative Group, established by the GATT Council on 7 February 1975, held its first meeting, which was of an organizational character, in the Conference Room of the Villa Le Bocage on 13 and 14 March 1975. The following countries or groups of countries were represented at the meeting:

Argentina	European Communities	Romania
Australia	and its member States	South Africa
Austria	Finland	Spain
Brazil	Hungary	Sweden
Bulgaria	Japan	Switzerland
Canada	New Zealand	United States
Dominican Republic	Poland	Uruguay

In addition, at the invitation of the Group, the representative of the FAO in Geneva attended the meeting as an observer.

Agenda

2. The Group adopted as the basis for its discussion the topics outlined in paragraph 3 of the airgram convening the meeting (GATT/AIR/1148) with the addition of an item for "other business".

Participation in the Group of non-member countries of GATT

3. The Group agreed that the secretariat should prepare a note for circulation to member countries of the United Nations who were not also members of the GATT, drawing their attention to the Group's existence and inviting them to participate.

Relations with intergovernmental organizations interested in international trade in meat

4. Intergovernmental organizations having a special expertise in the field of production and trade in meat and wishing to attend meetings of the Group would be invited to do so as observers. At the invitation of the Group a representative of the FAO which had indicated its interest in the work of the Group, attended the meeting as an observer. The secretariat was requested to advise the secretariats of the ECE and of the OECD of the Group's existence to see whether they would wish to attend future meetings of the Group in the capacity of observers.

Relations with non-governmental organizations

5. It was agreed to hold over discussion on this question until the next meeting of the Group.

Nature and scope of the activities, on which, in the initial stages of the Group's work, it would be appropriate to concentrate

6. In the first place there was general agreement that initially the Group should concentrate on the bovine sector, that is on bovine cattle and meat deriving therefrom at all stages of production, processing and trade. This would be without prejudice to the possible subsequent introduction of other types of meat into the work of the Group or to the discussion of other types of meat on certain occasions, for example, in discussing trends in consumption.

7. Secondly, there was general agreement that, having regard to its terms of reference, the Group would provide a forum for consultation and exchange of views on all matters affecting international trade in livestock and meat based on a regular flow of up-to-date information on production and trade and on national policy measures affecting the bovine sector. The Group would not, however, be a forum for criticism of, or negotiation on, national policies. Rather the Group's activities would be directed to developing closer co-operation amongst participants and a better mutual understanding of the international meat market. The Group's on-going analyses of the market situation would provide something of an early warning system designed to promote the formulation of more harmonious national policies and to avoid market disequilibria.

8. Thirdly, it was noted that in all this every endeavour ought to be made not to duplicate the work done by other intergovernmental organizations.

9. As regards what may be referred to as the modus operandi to be adopted by the Group for its regular sessions, it was agreed that it would have as its basic agenda two items: one would be an analysis of the current market situation and the other would be a review of the immediate or foreseeable market trends and also the

longer term perspective. For the purpose of its review of current market conditions and foreseeable trends the Group would have available to it such data as it may agree to collect on a regular basis. It was suggested that this could be supplemented by assessments to be furnished by individual participants. For its review of the longer term perspectives the Group could draw on the work being done in this field by other organizations.

The identification of the data required to enable the Group to carry out its functions, and the procedures for its collection and dissemination having regard to the availability of such data from existing sources

10. It was noted that a major difficulty encountered in the analysis and interpretation of market conditions and trends was that the available data were often presented on different bases. It was considered fundamental to the effectiveness of the Group's consultations that it should have available to it regularly up-dated information presented so far as possible on a homogeneous basis.

11. As regards the type of information to be collected it was generally considered that this should cover all stages of production and trade including in each case a breakdown according to the major elements and variables. A number of observations were made concerning the collection of retrospective data, on whether data should be collected on a monthly, quarterly or some other basis, and on the areas where there were gaps in the information available. It was agreed that in order to proceed with this matter the secretariat should prepare and circulate a model questionnaire on the kind of data which participants had indicated might be useful to the work of the Group. In the light of the responses received and in consultation with interested participants the secretariat would then refine the model questionnaire and re-submit it to participants for consideration at the next meeting of the Group.

Next meeting of the Group

12. In order to have an exchange of views at the earliest possible opportunity it was agreed that at its next meeting the Group would consult on current market conditions and foreseeable trends. This consultation would be based on submissions and information supplied by participants including to the extent possible data on a retrospective basis.

Date of next meeting

13. It was agreed that, in view of the need for the secretariat to consult with participants on the model questionnaire, the date and duration of the next meeting would be fixed by the Chairman in consultation with participants on the understanding that the next meeting would be held as soon as possible but that physical restraints may require it to be held in June 1975.

Frequency of meetings

14. There was general agreement that the Group should meet on a regular basis. A number of suggestions were put forward concerning the frequency to be established for the regular meetings of the Group. It was agreed to revert to this question at the next meeting of the Group on the basis that in the light of the decisions taken at that meeting on the model questionnaire and of the experience gained from its first consultations, the Group would be better placed to decide the question of the frequency to be established for its regular sessions.

Record of meetings

15. It was agreed that the present note summarizing the main points of the first organizational meeting be prepared for circulation also to non-GATT member countries who may be interested in the work of the Group, but that records of future meetings of the Group would be restricted to participants.

Other business

16. Referring to the question of the frequency of meetings, one participant requested that delegations should be prepared to state, at the next meeting, how soon they could possibly collect and submit data with respect to the various elements which might be agreed upon in terms of the model questionnaire.