

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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INTEGRATED DATA BASE

LIST NO. 1 OF OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS

This is the first in a series of lists of questions prepared by the Secretariat for the delegations. The purpose is to obtain guidance from delegations in settling details of the Integrated Data Base.

If we are to meet the schedule of having the IDB fully operational within eighteen months, it is essential that questions submitted to delegations by the Secretariat be (collectively) answered as quickly as possible.

To help insure that this happens, the Secretariat proposes to adopt the following guideline: if a question remains unanswered one month after being submitted to delegations, the Secretariat will assume an answer and proceed with the work on the Data Base. There could, of course, occasionally be questions which delegations would request to be exempt from this "one-month" rule, but such exemptions would have to be kept to an absolute minimum. Delegations would, of course, be free to revise the Secretariat's assumed answer at some future date, but only at the cost of adding to the amount of time required to make the Data Base operational.

Part I of the following list of questions should be given priority because it deals directly with the format content of the Data Base.

It is suggested that a meeting be scheduled for the week of 16 May to discuss all questions related to the format content. If any questions concerning the format content remain unanswered at the end of that meeting, the Secretariat will make assumptions about the answers and proceed with its work.

I. General.

Have the delegations identified any problems or omissions in the formats proposed by the Secretariat ?

If so, relevant comments should be communicated to the Secretariat as soon as possible, since work on the IDB application systems, based on the formats as they now stand, is in progress.

II. Import statistics file.

(1) Treatment code:

If a delegation cannot provide the treatment code, would it be acceptable that approximations be made as at present in the Tariff Study?

In the Tariff Study, the treatment code is recorded by the Secretariat. Imports from a supplier which is, in principle, entitled to the preference for a given product, are considered as receiving preferential treatment without taking into account limitations (quota, ceiling, etc.), rules of origin or other restrictive regulations.

(2) Trade aggregates recorded for each tariff item:

In addition to total imports, would it be useful to calculate and physically store in the import file, other aggregates of trading partners?

These aggregates could, for example, refer to total imports from:

- GATT contracting parties
- MFN origins
- GSP origins
- Free-trade area origins
- Other preferential origins

Other aggregates could also be compiled to record total imports entitled to:

- MFN treatment
- GSP treatment
- Free-trade area treatment
- Other preferential treatment

III. Coded part of the tariff file.

(1) MFN duties

How should tariff concessions offered during the Uruguay Round be reflected in the file?

In the Tariff Study, post-Tokyo round concessions were recorded as they would be applied after all staged reductions had been implemented.

(2) Preferential duties

Are preferential duties to be recorded for illustrative purposes or should there be a systematic identification of the trade covered by each preferential duty?

The identification of the trade covered by preferential duties is only possible if the treatment code recorded in the import file is recorded without approximations.

(3) Ad valorem equivalents of specific rates

On which basis should percentage ad valorem equivalents of specific rates be calculated?

In the Tariff Study, ad valorem equivalents of specific rates were calculated on the basis of the unit value of imports from m.f.n. origins (including imports from GSP origins not entitled to other preferential arrangements).

(4) Use of the tariff suffix.

It is proposed that tariff sub-items (without trade) be recorded using the tariff item suffix. Is this proposal acceptable, especially with regard to the compilation of a simple arithmetic average of sub-items' rates, which would be recorded under the principal tariff item number ?

(5) Period of validity of the duty.

Would the period of validity of the duty be used only with duties applicable under temporary legislation during the reference year ?

Would the period of validity be also used to keep historical series of duties applicable during several years ?

IV. Textual part of the tariff file.

(1) Product descriptions.

- Should abbreviated product descriptions be preferred to the full text product descriptions ?

- Product descriptions will be submitted in one of the GATT's three official languages. Would it be acceptable that product descriptions beyond the HS 6-digit level are recorded only in the official language in which it is submitted (up to and including 6-digit level, product descriptions are published in English and French and the Customs Co-operation Council has translated them into Spanish) ?

(2) Footnotes.

Should footnotes be processed in computer reports or would it be sufficient to produce a separate listing of the footnotes ?

Should it be envisaged that footnotes be used in relation with files other than the textual tariff file ?

How should the footnotes be maintained ?

V. Coded quantitative restriction file.

(1) Codes used to record quantitative restrictions and GATT articles.

Are delegations prepared to use in their submissions, the codes proposed by the Secretariat for recording quantitative restrictions and GATT articles ?

Codes for GATT documents will be recorded by the Secretariat.

(2) Codes attached to the QR.

As proposed at this stage, two codes are attached to the QR. One identifies the GATT body to which the QR was notified, the other identifies, where applicable, a restriction not covering all products of the tariff item. Would any additional codes be required in the near future ?

(3) Period of validity of the QR.

The two questions raised concerning the period of validity of the duty are also applicable in this file (see above, Part III, item 5).

(4) QR item suffix.

Is the use of the QR item suffix to identify parts of tariff lines covered by a QR acceptable ?

VI. Textual part of the quantitative restriction file.

- Product descriptions of QR sub-items.

Should the abbreviated text be preferred to the full text of product descriptions ?

With regard to the language in which product descriptions will be recorded, the question is the same as for the descriptions in the "Textual tariff file" (see above).

VII. Other.

In the present formats, the tariff line number is recorded using 25 characters, including 4 characters for suffixes. Without changing the formats for submissions, the Secretariat envisages reducing, if possible, those 25 characters to 17 before the information is loaded into the data base.

Could the delegations indicate to the Secretariat if the tariff number (including 4-digit suffixes) could be recorded in all cases, using 17 characters ?