

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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Consultative Group of Eighteen
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DISCUSSIONS REGARDING AGRICULTURAL TRADE IN OTHER FORA

Note by the Secretariat

Introduction

1. At its fourteenth meeting in March 1981, the Consultative Group of Eighteen requested the secretariat to prepare, inter alia, a note on discussions regarding agricultural trade in other fora.
2. The present note is an attempt to meet this request. It contains information on meetings attended by members of the GATT secretariat since March 1981 as well as information which has otherwise become available to the secretariat since then.
3. The Twenty-second session of the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board was held in March and May 1981. The Board adopted a resolution establishing a sessional Committee at the Board's Twenty-fourth session and annually thereafter to review both the patterns of production and trade in the world economy and developments involving restrictions on trade. In order to facilitate these reviews, the UNCTAD Secretary-General was requested to submit the relevant factual and analytical studies of trends in production and trade, and on restrictions of trade, including an inventory of non-tariff barriers. Further work on matters related to the Common Fund was pursued in Working Party II in July 1981, when legal issues, interest rates, currency provisions, minimum financial requirements, guarantees and internationally co-ordinated stocks were discussed.
4. The World Food Council held its Seventh ministerial session in Yugoslavia in May 1981 and discussed, inter alia, the food issue in the context of the international development strategy as well as the future rôle of the WFC. A set of conclusions and recommendations concerning, inter alia, national action and international support, co-operation among developing countries, international trade, and building of world food security, were adopted and submitted to the UN General Assembly for consideration.
5. The FAO Committee on World Food Security met in Rome in April. Major items on the agenda were: assessment of the world food security situation and the adequacy of stocks; review of steps taken to implement the Plan of Action on world food security; preparedness to meet acute and large-scale food shortages; and,

a review of special arrangements for food security assistance to developing countries. The report of the Committee on world food security was discussed by the FAO Council in June 1981, when the FAO Council reviewed the world food and agricultural situation. At its meeting in September 1981, the FAO Committee on Commodity Problems reviewed the world commodity situation and related international action and discussed commodity trade, protectionism, and agricultural adjustment.

6. The OECD Agriculture Committee met in April 1981 and discussed, inter alia, the preparation for the June meeting of the World Food Council and for a meeting of the Committee itself at ministerial level. Furthermore, the Committee reviewed systems of food aid provided to developing countries, food policies in general, and agricultural production and food consumption in Eastern European Countries. At a subsequent session held in June 1981, the Committee devoted itself mainly to its own future programme of work.

7. The International Wheat Council and the Food Aid Committee met in June/July 1981 in Madrid. The world wheat market situation and the operation of the Conventions were reviewed. Furthermore, future action related to the Wheat Trade Convention was discussed, but no decision was reached to resume the UN grains negotiations, suspended since 1979. During the meetings, a Conference of Governments was held relating to the extension of the International Wheat Agreement, 1971, which since 1980 consisted of the Wheat Trade Convention, 1971, and the Food Aid Convention, 1980. The Agreement and the two Conventions have been extended until 30 June 1983.

8. The International Coffee Council met in March/April and again in September 1981. The Council reviewed the market situation and discussed the operation of the International Coffee Agreement and notably the quota system. It further discussed a possible renegotiation or extension of the Agreement. There was also some discussion of particular trade problems.

9. The International Sugar Council at its Twelfth session in May 1981 reviewed market developments and the actions taken under the Agreement. Furthermore, the Council considered arrangements regarding the Agreement beyond 1982, and discussed in particular technical and procedural problems relating to the operation of the current Agreement in connexion with its extension beyond 1982 or negotiation of a new Agreement.

10. A First World Sugar Farmers' Conference, sponsored by the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), was held in Mexico in May 1981. On this occasion, besides production aspects, national sugar policies of a number of countries as well as the International Sugar Agreement were also discussed. It was agreed to seek the establishment by IFAP of a Council of the World Sugar Farmers' Conference composed of ten cane growers and ten beet growers.

11. The International Permanent Meat Office held its Fourth Congress in Cape Town in May 1981, in order to discuss problems mainly related to livestock production, meat processing and industrialization, distribution and marketing, sanitation and hygiene and international meat policy. A short discussion on problems relating to meat trade also took place.

12. The International Association of Seed Crushers held its 57th Congress in San Francisco in June 1981, and discussed the prospects for the oilseed processing industry in the 1980's. It was foreseen, inter alia, that the prosperity of this industry could only be fostered during the 1980's by expanding markets in developing countries.