

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

COM.AG/W/45
23 January 1970

Special Distribution

Agriculture Committee

MEETING OF 29-30 JANUARY 1970

Note by Secretariat

1. At its meeting of 29-30 January the Committee will resume discussion of its future work programme and of the means whereby the existing procedures regarding the disposal of commodity surpluses could be improved with a view to drawing up its report to the Council. This note sets out the position reached at the Committee's meeting of November-December 1969. It is circulated for the convenience of delegations.

Future work programme

2. The discussion was based on a proposal by the Director-General (Spec(69)146). There appeared to be agreement in the Committee that its work should be carried forward in a number of working groups, the questions of the number of groups and the exact definition of the measures to be covered by each group remaining to be settled. The main question outstanding, however, is that of the terms of reference to be given to the groups.

3. Most members of the Committee took the position that work on the third stage, the search for mutually acceptable solutions, should be initiated and that each of the groups should be requested to establish, with respect to the matters within its purview, the components of a range of possible solutions, whether alternative or cumulative, and to suggest their commodity and country coverage, on the following understandings, (a) that this work would be essentially of an exploratory nature and that the definition of a range of possible solutions did not imply a commitment to conform to any of these solutions, (b) that it would be necessary at some point of time to regroup compromise solutions in each of the different areas in order to evaluate the equitable contribution of each in the overall effort, and (c) that the collection of further information and the further analysis of problems would be undertaken where this was necessary to advance the identification of elements of possible solutions.

4. Other delegations took the position that work still remained to be done on the identification of problems and that, while it was open to individual delegations to make proposals at any time, the Committee should not initiate the third stage, the search for mutually acceptable solutions before this work was complete.

5. Some delegations stressed that priority should be given to those problems which were of particular interest to developing countries.

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Disposal of commodity surpluses (COM.AG/16 and COM.AG/W/41)

6. There appears to be agreement in the Committee that a new resolution relating to concessional transactions should be referred to the CONTRACTING PARTIES for their approval.

7. The secretariat has proposed that this resolution should also cover government aids to exports, both direct and indirect, and certain other governmental practices, such as those which had the effect of pre-empting the whole or part of export markets.

8. The majority of the Committee's members supported the broad lines of this proposal, although the wording of the proposed resolution and the definition of the transactions to which it would refer have not yet been discussed.

9. Other members pointed out that the CONTRACTING PARTIES requested the Committee to examine this question "within the framework of its work programme". They said that the working groups which are to be established should decide what information should be received on a regular basis on the matters with which they would deal, and that there was no reason to restrict this possibility to the group dealing with measures affecting exports.