

CoA - Information Session on Transparency

Session 4: The Review process – Sharing of national experiences

Brazil

- At the outset, let me highlight that Brazil attaches great importance to transparency and the review process, as envisaged in Article 18 of the Agreement on Agriculture. In that regard, our top priority is to comply with our own commitments and keep our notifications to the Committee on Agriculture up-to-date. We make all efforts as well to respond to requests of information from the Secretariat and from other WTO members in a timely manner.
- Having said that, Brazil does not have a structured system for the CoA review process. There are no dedicated personnel in charge of several elements encompassed in the process: reviewing notification, distributing notifications to stakeholders or preparing and answering questions. Most of the work in the area is done on an ad-hoc basis. As such, raising an issue in the CoA will depend on one or more of the governmental agencies with competence in agricultural trade – or the private sector – bringing the issue to the attention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is responsible for trade negotiations in our system.

What is the process, then?

- Usually, when a specific notification from a third member is considered relevant, its content will be discussed in an interagency meeting convened by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- If additional information or clarification is needed, the competent agency (most of the cases the Ministry of Agriculture) is asked to prepare an initial draft of questions which will then be discussed and approved in that setting. The same approach applies to preparing answers to questions raised by our trading partners. The agency whose program is being questioned is responsible for preparing the initial draft. If required, the private sector may be invited to the meeting to present its view on the matter.
- In both cases, the information – questions to other members or our answers – is uploaded to the AG-IMS systems or sent to the WTO Secretariat through our Mission in Geneva.

What are the reasons?

- The reasons for raising a question in the CoA vary. Market considerations are, of course, important and for that reason we try to monitor more closely notifications submitted by our main trading partners. In some cases, the “warning signals” coming from the private sector are the main reason for asking a question in the committee, as our companies are the first to be affected by changes in our partners’ trade policies.
- In any case, we follow a two steps approach: we first try to engage the member bilaterally; raising our concern or asking for additional information

through our embassies. Depending on the feedback we receive, an economic and trade impact assessment is done and discussed in the interagency meeting I referred to in the beginning of my presentation.

- If one looks to the records of the last 8 CoA meetings (from March 2014 to June 2016), Brazil has submitted 8 questions (average 1 per meeting). Of the 8 questions, 2 were related to a more general and systemic concern and 6 were raised in the context of a direct trade concern.
 - You may recall that Brazil raised concerns in the Committee about Thailand's sugar policies. The issue is now under consultations at the DSB.
- So, in general, Brazil will ask questions in the review process when a concrete trade interest is at stake. We believe this is the way we can profit of the transparency exercise in the CoA given the limited resources available.
 - In both circumstances – preparing a question or answering to questions from other members – the participation of the mission in Geneva is important. As we do not have dedicated personnel for implementing Article 18 of the AoA, the mission in Geneva, apart from contributing technically to the process, keeps track of the administrative aspects, such as deadlines and uploading the information in the AG-IMS. The presence of an agricultural attaché in the mission is extremely helpful, as it facilitates liaising with the experts in capital.

- Preparing and answering to questions can be a challenging exercise. Brazil aims to apply full transparency with regard to its measures, confident that they are in line with our multilateral commitments. We are committed to improve the quality of the information we provide to our trading partners by providing the best information available.
- When it comes to raising questions, one of the challenges is to achieve the level of specificity that will eventually lead to an answer that is satisfactory to our stakeholders, both public and private.
- Nevertheless, we believe there are ways to improve our participation in the CoA review process. Having access to up to date notifications can be considered a good starting point. Notifications are the main transparency tool in the Agreement on Agriculture. Submitting them regularly not only facilitates the monitoring of the AoA implementation, but it is also essential for the agricultural negotiations, particularly in domestic support.
- Finally, I know this is of subject, but I would like to finish with a word on our own notification procedure. To keep our notifications up to date, the Ministry of Agriculture coordinates with a large number of agencies, including the Brazilian Statistics Institute, Ministry of Treasury, CONAB (National Food Company), Ministry of Rural Development, among others. The work done by the Ministry of Agriculture is essential to guarantee the accuracy and regularity of our notifications.