

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

COM. AG/1
12 January 1968

Limited Distribution

Agriculture Committee

Original: English

PROPOSALS ON PROGRAMME OF WORK

CANADA

In GATT airgram 631 of 20 December 1967 members of the Agriculture Committee were requested to submit proposals to the secretariat by 10 January 1968 regarding the programme for the implementation of the terms of reference of the Committee. The following is the text of a communication from the Permanent Mission of Canada in response to the airgram.

Canada attaches considerable importance to the work of the Agriculture Committee and would hope that it could begin immediately to carry out the terms of reference agreed by the CONTRACTING PARTIES. It is important at this exploratory stage that the examination of problems in the agricultural sector be conducted in a positive and pragmatic manner. It is our understanding that the Committee will direct its attention to the longer term and that it is not the vehicle for the resolution of pressing trade problems. Nonetheless it may in the course of its examination uncover problems which require immediate attention and these should be dealt with, in our view, under regular GATT procedures, e.g. Article XXII. The approach of the Committee should be flexible. The work programme should be re-examined regularly to ensure that the terms of reference of the Committee are being implemented.

In accordance with the discussions at the twenty-fourth session, we envisage that the general work programme would begin with the identification of the agricultural products important in trade and a factual examination of all elements of trade and production policies which constitute barriers to exports. This work should include an assessment of the post Kennedy Round situation for agriculture with respect both to tariffs and all non-tariff barriers. There is a particular need in relation to agriculture to identify and catalogue all non-tariff barriers to trade including relevant elements of domestic policies. All available documentation about such policies should be examined and governments should provide up-to-date information with respect to both their domestic policies and the obstacles encountered by their exports.

It is our view that in order to facilitate this factual examination the Committee should immediately establish working groups to study those commodities that warrant consideration in depth. Our suggestions for groups at this time

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are cereals, oilseeds, live cattle and meat, fruit and vegetables, tobacco, and dairy products. We would, of course, be open to proposals for additional groups. The coverage of the groups should be broad and include, where appropriate, both unprocessed and processed products. It may be desirable as the work proceeds to separate certain processed products from the groups and to consider them on the same basis as industrial products.

We envisage that the work of identifying and cataloguing barriers to trade and the group examinations in depth would proceed concurrently. In the course of this work various approaches or proposals which might provide a basis for trade liberalization are likely to emerge. The Committee's work should include an examination of all relevant proposals both in relation to their general application in the agricultural sector and the problems in each group of products.