

# GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

RESTRICTED

## TARIFFS AND TRADE

L/6295

11 January 1988

Limited Distribution

Original: English

NOTIFICATION UNDER PARAGRAPH 3 OF THE UNDERSTANDING  
REGARDING NOTIFICATION, CONSULTATION, DISPUTE  
SETTLEMENT AND SURVEILLANCE

Communication from Australia

The following communication, dated 21 December 1987, has been received from the Permanent Mission of Australia.

Importation of Foodstuffs into Australia following  
the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Reactor Accident

Since 3 July 1986, a surveillance program has operated to ensure that foodstuffs imported into Australia from countries affected by the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant do not contain unacceptable levels of radioactivity. This program utilizes a random sampling test of imports to confirm that the levels are low. For certain countries (refer list below) there is an additional requirement that certification of the Caesium-137 concentration be available for each consignment.

If any consignment shows, by certificate or by direct measurement, a level in excess of 100 becquerel per kilogram (Bq/kg) a permit to import is required from the Department of Community Services and Health. A permit is granted provided an assessment shows that the risk to the population from consumption of the foodstuff is negligible. Up to the present time, a limit on the concentration of Caesium-137 has not been noted in the assessment procedure.

Whilst certification and random sampling have confirmed that the concentration of Caesium-137 in most foodstuffs imported into Australia from the affected countries is low compared to the trigger level of 100 Bq/kg, a minor proportion of foodstuffs such as nuts and herbs has exceeded this level. These items are only consumed in small quantities and are often used as ingredients in other prepared foods. In order to ensure that any radioactivity arising from the Chernobyl accident in such items, whether consumed as imported or incorporated into prepared foods, is not

./.

unacceptably high, it has been determined that import permits covering product with Caesium-137 concentrations greater than 600 bq/kg will not be issued in future; this applies to all food imports, regardless of the country of origin.

It is also proposed to maintain the existing random sampling program and to extend it by targeting those foodstuffs most likely to contain radioactivity attributable to the Chernobyl accident. Certificates will still be required for foodstuffs from the following countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Turkey and the USSR.