

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

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Group of Negotiations on Goods (GATT)
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The contracting parties have established in the Midterm Agreement an excellent framework for improving the capability of the GATT to address issues involving sanitary and phytosanitary regulations. In this regard, the contracting parties agreed that harmonization should be based on "appropriate standards established by relevant international organizations." The agreement also states that the GATT dispute settlement process should be improved "in order to provide the necessary input of scientific expertise ... relying on relevant international organizations."

Without precluding the possible designation of other scientific bodies, the contracting parties have recognized in the Midterm Agreement three organizations, i.e., the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the International Office of Epizootics, and the International Plant Protection Convention, to provide these standards and expertise. It is important that these organizations immediately begin working toward fulfilling their role in the improved GATT approach to sanitary and phytosanitary regulations.

Accomplishing the goals established by the Midterm Agreement will require a rigorous effort by the Negotiating Group on Agriculture and especially by the Working Group on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Regulations and Barriers. As a separate but parallel and equally important effort, experts on food safety, animal health and plant health from the various contracting parties should meet under the auspices of the relevant international organizations. The task of these experts during the next eighteen months would be to develop (or select from existing work) the technical guidelines and standards which will be used as the reference points for the strengthened GATT approach to sanitary and phytosanitary issues.

GATT SECRETARIAT

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The role of the relevant scientific organizations should be to facilitate the international ad hoc consultations at which the experts can develop or select these guidelines and standards. Each scientific organization would also need to work with the GATT to establish the features of a permanent relationship for the provision of scientific input into the GATT dispute settlement process. These international scientific organizations would not, however, perform the function of dispute settlement, which would remain solely with the GATT.

The contracting parties should request the GATT Secretariat to contact the appropriate officials of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the International Office of Epizootics and the International Plant Protection Convention. The purpose of the contact would be first to confirm that, in accordance with the results of the Midterm Agreement, the GATT is formally requesting their cooperation in support of improving the effectiveness of the GATT process and furthering the harmonization of national regulations. Secondly, the GATT Secretariat should strongly encourage each of the three organizations to arrange (outside of the Uruguay Round negotiations) the international expert consultations necessary to develop or select the technical guidelines and standards essential for the improved GATT approach. The GATT Secretariat should also emphasize the urgency of this matter in view of the 1990 completion date of the Uruguay Round.