

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE SPS COMMITTEE ON ENQUIRY POINTS –
31 OCTOBER 2003**

Comment by Australia

1. The *Report of the analysis on SPS notifications in 2002* (G/SPS/GEN/378) identified issues of that have been of concern to recent and longer term Members of the WTO SPS Committee.
2. The number of SPS notifications has increased significantly in recent years, partly as a result of new Members fulfilling their obligations of accession, and partly reflecting the world's increasing awareness of human, animal and plant life and health and food safety issues, and consequent changes to domestic legislative requirements. It is likely that this trend will continue.

Resources

3. Australia concurs with Argentina (G/SPS/GEN/425) that the greater volume of SPS notifications generally necessitates dedicated resources, including appropriately trained personnel, to implement the SPS notification procedures (G/SPS/7/Rev.2 and Add.1). Australia has a dedicated administrative officer who retrieves and distributes all SPS notifications, coordinates responses to requests for further information, and relays Australia's comments back to other national enquiry points. The position is enhanced by the maintenance of electronic address lists to ensure that notifications are distributed as soon as possible to relevant national agencies and other interested parties. The distribution lists are constructed by way of self-nomination, ensuring that interested parties receive relevant notifications. This ensures that interested parties receive notifications quickly, giving the maximum time for review of and comment on notified documents.

Availability of documentation

4. Increasingly, the location of full documentation on countries' national authority websites is indicated either in notifications or in response to queries through national enquiry points. Difficulties can arise when documents that are large and/or have complex formatting need to be reviewed. G/SPS/7/Rev.2 suggests the inclusion of an executive summary at the same site as larger documents to provide an initial summary of the information for Member countries and domestic consumers alike. Australia has adopted this approach and has also initiated provision of compact disc (CD) copies of larger documents to facilitate their distribution, especially overseas. Alternately larger documents can be divided into smaller sections so that they are more accessible for downloading. Hard copies or reports in other media may be provided by mail, however, this significantly reduces the period available for comment.
5. SPS Enquiry Points sometimes respond to requests for full text of proposed or amended measures with an internet address, which may be incomplete, or simply direct the reader to the

website of the national authority without further location details to find the measure or its description. It would be helpful if sufficient information were provided to efficiently locate the documentation.

Communication with national enquiry points

6. To enable further advice to be sought more easily following a notification, current contact details (including the e-mail address) of the advising national enquiry point need to be provided with each notification. E-mail is an efficient means of communication and enables SPS enquiry points to act as effective conduits for communicating information to the relevant national authorities.
