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RECENT BILATERAL SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY AGREEMENTS RELATED TO CITRUS TRADE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This document reviews major bilateral phytosanitary agreements on market access for fresh citrus that were reached in 2005. It is based on information collected from media reports and industry sources. As there is no centralized source of official information on these agreements, this review may not be comprehensive. Delegates are invited to inform the Secretariat of other agreements that may have been omitted.

2. As for many fresh products, the importation of fresh citrus may potentially result in the introduction or spread of exotic pests and diseases. To prevent such risks, governments usually require a detailed import risk analysis before granting access to their market. The time required to reach agreements varies but can be significant. Agreements are usually accompanied by specific import requirements to reduce the risk of spreading harmful pests.

II. THE CHINESE MARKET

3. The Chinese market is expected to grow steadily and many fresh citrus exporters are seeking access. However, market access in China requires the negotiation of product-specific import protocols. In 2005, some citrus exporting countries gained access to the Chinese market while others continue to negotiate.

4. The Australian citrus industry has gained access to China following the signature of a formal quarantine protocol between the Australian and Chinese Governments. This agreement follows five years of negotiations between interested parties. It covers all major commercial varieties of citrus – including oranges, mandarins, lemons and grapefruits from all of Australia's

citrus producing areas. The import protocol that was agreed entails land-based or in-transit cold sterilization of all fruit at 1°C. In September 2006, the Chinese quarantine authorities cleared the first direct commercial shipment of Australian citrus to mainland China. The fruits shipped were mandarins. The Australian and Chinese authorities continue to negotiate the quarantine work plan for oranges.

5. The Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has reached an agreement with the Chinese authorities to facilitate citrus exports to China. The preliminary agreement is the result of over six years of negotiations. The two nations signed a bilateral protocol after the inspection of citrus-producing regions aiming to export to China. The protocol is expected to be advantageous for Spain with flexible cold treatment regulations, according to Ailimpo (the Spanish lemon and grapefruit trade association). The market access agreement with China is viewed as beneficial for the Spanish lemon industry.

6. Other citrus producing countries are actively negotiating to access the Chinese market. Industry sources report that Peru has been negotiating access for citrus. The phytosanitary service SENASA was able to gain access for Peruvian mangoes within two years and Peru hopes the process for citrus will follow a similar timeline. Argentina has been able to negotiate import protocols with China for both oranges and grapefruits and, according to industry sources, shipments began in 2005. Argentina has not yet reached a market access agreement for lemons but negotiations are under way. According to press reports, China has relaxed its import protocols for South African citrus. The revised protocols are now similar to the current cold sterilization protocols for the United States and Japan.

III. THE UNITED STATES MARKET

7. China is not the only market that has recently opened its borders to allow greater access for fresh citrus. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has amended its fruit and vegetable regulations to allow (under certain conditions) the importation of fresh grapefruits, limes, mandarin oranges or tangerines, sweet oranges and tangelos from approved areas of Peru. According to APHIS, this decision is based on scientific evidence from a recent pest risk analysis that these citrus products can be safely imported into the United States. The fruits must originate from an approved citrus producing zone and are subject to cold treatment to ensure that the shipments are free of pests.

8. Similarly, APHIS issued a final rule to amend its fruit and vegetable regulations to allow the importation of clementines, mandarins and tangerines from Chile. Once again, citrus imports from Chile to the United States are subject to a set of conditions. To ensure that plant pests do not enter the United States through the importation of these commodities, APHIS requires that the imports originate from areas free of Mediterranean fruit fly and the fruit be subject to phytosanitary inspection. If the fruit does not meet the required conditions upon inspection it must be fumigated with methyl bromide or be cold treated to ensure it is free of pests.

IV. OTHER MARKETS

9. Media sources report that the USDA has negotiated a tentative protocol for California citrus exports to the Republic of Korea for the 2005/2006 season. This protocol was designed to address the Republic of Korea’s concerns over the risk that Californian imports might carry the *septoria citri* fungus. The new import system entails stricter inspections by Korean quarantine services and more onerous cultivation practices for California growers than in previous protocols. The Californian citrus industry has expressed its satisfaction at having a plan in place to facilitate exports to the Republic of Korea, its main overseas market.

10. In 2005, the Australian Government announced market access for Italian sweet oranges. In response to a request by the Italian Government, Biosecurity Australia (BA) conducted a pest risk analysis to determine whether sweet oranges from Italy could be imported safely. Following the analysis BA made a report to the Director of the Animal and Plant Quarantine that the sweet oranges from Italy should be allowed entry under specific quarantine conditions. Conditions include registration of export orchards, cold treatment in Italy or in-transit and pre-export inspections. The protocol requires inspection of 600 units for quarantine pests, in systematically selected random samples per homogenous consignment or lot.

11. Recent industry reports suggest that Pakistan has actively been seeking new markets for mandarin (kinnow) exports. Iran (Islamic Republic of) reopened its doors for Pakistani mandarins following the signing of a memorandum of understanding in early 2006. The Iranian import protocol requires phytosanitary certificates and a cold treatment of fruit at 2.22ºC or less for 16 days. Kenya also opened its border to Pakistani mandarins in early 2005 and exporters in Pakistan expect that the Republic of Korea and Japan will follow suit in the near future. New market access has been made possible by the work of the Pakistan Horticulture Development Export Board (PHDEB), which was created by the government two years ago to search for new export opportunities.