

these proposals, including specific suggestions, in advance of the October meeting. Although the Committee has completed its work program, any further comments and suggestions on the five proposals will be considered at the first meeting in 2004.

The SPS Committee held informal discussions prior to each of the regular meetings to consider the issue of equivalence. The Committee worked with the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE, formerly the Office International des Epizooties) and the International Plant Protection Convention to ensure coherence in the development of guidance for judging the equivalence of sanitary and phytosanitary measures. It will monitor progress in implementing equivalence in the context of the SPS Agreement by maintaining the topic as a standing agenda item for the Committee's regular meetings.

In addition, the Committee held a special meeting on the operation of enquiry points on the margins of the October meeting (this special meeting was the first of its type in four years). The meeting, which brought together representatives of members' national notification authorities and enquiry points, used panel presentations and discussions to highlight obstacles to the effective performance of national notification authorities and enquiry points and to identify solutions to these problems. The Standards Council of Canada, Canada's national enquiry point, participated in these discussions.

At the June and October meetings of the Committee, Canada delivered statements on developments relating to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in Canada. We provided the latest information on the investigation and Canada's regulatory response (see the BSE overview in this chapter for further information). We called on trading partners to resume trade with Canada, citing science and compelling evidence that the incidence of BSE in Canada is that of a minimal-risk country as defined in the OIE's Terrestrial Animal Health Code. We also encouraged support for the adoption of improvements to the OIE chapter on BSE. On the margins of the Committee meetings, Canada met with key trading partners (China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea) to press for the immediate, science-based removal of their BSE-related restrictions on imports from Canada.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

On May 20, 2003, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) announced that it had quarantined an Alberta farm in an investigation of a case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), commonly known as mad cow disease. The CFIA immediately launched a thorough investigation. On June 9, the CFIA announced that its active investigation was drawing to a close and that all further test results were negative. The CFIA also announced that a team of international experts had validated its findings and agreed that the active investigation had achieved its maximum potential. On June 26, the international panel team was made public. On July 2, the CFIA's final investigation report was made public.

Canada has taken steps to implement the corrective measures proposed by the international team. On July 18, Canada announced a ban on specified risk material (SRM) for products destined for human consumption, which came into effect July 24. On January 9, 2004, the Government of Canada announced \$92.1 million in funding over the next five years to enhance measures for identifying, tracking and tracing and for increased BSE surveillance and testing. The government is currently consulting stakeholders on animal feed control and surveillance.

Immediately following the May 20 announcement, most of our trading partners instituted temporary import bans on live cattle, beef and beef products from Canada. The United States is by far our largest export market for cattle and beef (annual sales are worth \$3.5 billion, made up of \$1.8 billion in cattle

The Committee continues to be widely used by Canada and other WTO members, including developing country members, as a forum for raising bilateral issues. In 2003, Canada raised 16 issues including Mexico's restrictions on beans, the European Union's biotechnology polices, India's restrictions on bovine semen and Venezuela's import permits. The Committee also serves as a useful forum for members to use in providing updates on issues of interest to other trading partners. During the past