

Canadians on "A Canadian Perspective on the Precautionary Approach/Principle." The consultation document can be found on the departmental Web site ([www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca)), and we expect discussions on this issue to continue for some time, both domestically and in various international forums.

Under the WTO TBT Agreement, Canada will continue to press for the removal of unnecessary or inappropriate regulatory, standards-based and conformity assessment-based trade barriers, thus maintaining or enhancing market access and lowering costs to producers and exporters. Specifically, Canada has been raising concerns over other countries' proposals for unnecessary or unjustifiable barriers to products derived from biotechnology, as well as over mandatory requirements for non-product-related process and production method labelling.

We will also work to improve transparency; promote regulatory reform and good regulatory practice by WTO members; align or harmonize standards internationally and with trading partners; and, if appropriate, negotiate mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) on conformity assessment. On this point, Canada has developed a policy approach to MRAs that assesses proposals on a case-by-case basis. It includes full consultation with federal and provincial (in their areas of jurisdiction) regulatory and trade officials, as well as with stakeholders, including industry.

Canada is an active participant in the ongoing work of the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade. We will continue to assist further implementation of the various obligations in the Agreement, which will reduce technical barriers to trade among Canada's trading partners and potentially facilitate the flow of Canadian goods to other countries. In this context, we are seeking to strengthen multilateral discussions on specific issues of importance to Canadian producers, exporters and governments in areas such as good regulatory practice, labelling, conformity assessment procedures and technical assistance to developing countries. We believe the issues related to developing-country capacity and trade-related technical assistance required to fully implement the TBT Agreement, as well as labelling issues, will receive particular attention in the coming year given the focus on these issues in the Doha Declaration.

### **Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

The WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures has been in force since 1995 and continues to work reasonably well. The Agreement stipulates that SPS measures must be based on scientific principles and scientific evidence; they must be applied only to the extent necessary, and they must not result in unfair discrimination or disguised restrictions on trade.

The Agreement established the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Committee), which is responsible for the operation and implementation of the Agreement. The Committee generally meets three times a year. Canada continues to be an active participant in the Committee meetings.

Over the last year, the SPS Committee has continued to focus its efforts on the implementation concerns of developing countries. In particular, the Committee addressed, as a priority, the concerns of developing countries on equivalence, transparency and technical assistance.

The Committee is increasingly being used by WTO members as a forum for raising bilateral issues. In 2001, WTO members raised more bilateral issues than ever before. Canada, for instance, raised concerns regarding the EU's proposed regulations on genetically modified organisms, the EU's measures affecting Canadian exports of animal products, Hungary's restrictions on Canadian meat, and India's ban on Canadian bovine semen imports.

Canada's position for the WTO Ministerial in Doha in November 2001 was to avoid re-opening the SPS Agreement, since re-opening might have risked weakening the Agreement's scientific basis. We consider that existing disciplines are clear, sufficient and balanced, and our priority is to concentrate on improved implementation of the existing Agreement through the ongoing work program of the SPS Committee. It was agreed at Doha that the Agreement will not be re-opened during the next round of WTO negotiations.

### **Biotechnology and GM Labelling**

Recently, a number of countries have implemented mandatory labelling requirements for food products processed or produced with genetically modified