

# Improving Transparency as a tool for the Implementation of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture

**Notifications:** AoA Article 18 has 8 regular notification obligations including market access, domestic support, and export subsidies, as well as export restrictions and prohibitions.



## The Problem:

- Notifications are **late, incomplete or incorrect**.
- Reporting burden onerous
- Difficult to review data.
- Failure to notify implies a Member does not understand own policy
- Lack of transparency impedes learning about how other Members are implementing their commitments.
- Notifications help monitor compliance, but also contribute to better appreciation and insight as to what is happening with implementation.

## Three generations of transparency:

“Right to know” since GATT 1947

Publication, enquiry points, notification sunlight as disinfectant, but not enough, thus:

Monitoring and surveillance since the Tokyo Round

TPRM, “specific trade concerns”

Seek clarification; ask about what should have been notified

Process only includes Members, thus:

Reporting and engagement since 2002

TBT and SPS Information Management Systems (IMS)

new Integrated Trade Intelligence Portal (I-TIP)

World Trade Report

## Challenges to Notification: Complexity

- Classification of Domestic Support can be problematic
- Members may improperly calculate their Total Aggregate Measurement of Support (Amber Box), or improperly interpret the rules on non-trade distorting support (Green Box)

## How to Improve Notifications: Committee Efforts

The CoA itself has developed and implemented innovative measures to foster greater transparency:

- Established a shared set of ‘Best Practices’ for notifications
- CoA Notification workshops in 2009 where members could directly consult with secretariat and other members on how to improve their notifications
- Designs for online notification through the
- Ag-IMS searchable database supported by Secretariat

## Progress:

- nearly 80% of the Membership was in full compliance for the implementation period 1995-2005, up from 50% in the previous year.
- For 1995-2010 implementation period, 72% of the membership was fully compliant with their notification obligations by the end of October 2012

## Doha Development Agenda proposals

The ‘Falconer Text’ included a major revision of Article 18 (Annex M)

- Further codification of notification responsibilities:
- Greater focus on monitoring and surveillance
- More robust forms of review
- Precision in the details of methodologies for calculation of support, subsidies and production

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Other proposals to better understand domestic support  
Reverse or shadow notification: combine OECD *Producer Support Estimates* (PSE) with WTO data to produce more timely estimates of domestic support in major traders

**New Tools:** The Integrated Trade Intelligence Portal will include a searchable database of Agriculture Notifications, however the Questions and Answers from committee will not—a major omission as we see in pyramid below.

Committee activities, notification and questions, are crucial for monitoring the Agreement’s implementation and promoting better understanding of agriculture policies. Formal dispute settlement isn’t where greatest transparency gains are made.

