Towards Adoption of a Pro-Active Outreach Strategy by the Committee for Agriculture and Its Subsidiary Bodies

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Note by the Secretariat

This document was first discussed at the December 2004 meeting of the Committee for Agriculture. As agreed, the Committee’s outreach strategy guidelines (Section V of this document) were revised subject to comments received from delegations during the discussion and submitted in writing.

The revised version was circulated on 13 April 2005 for approval under the written procedure. As no further comments were received, this document is now declassified.

As outlined in the document, the Secretariat will prepare and circulate, by the end of June, a draft pro-active outreach strategy based on the approved guidelines. Member countries will be asked for written comments which the Secretariat will incorporate into a revised version for discussion at the December 2005 meeting of the Committee for Agriculture.
TOWARDS ADOPTION OF A PRO-ACTIVE OUTREACH STRATEGY BY THE COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND ITS SUBSIDIARY BODIES

1. In a letter dated September 9, 2004 to all Committee Chairs, the Secretary General requested each Committee to develop a pro-active strategy that defines the role and participation of non-members in the work of the Committee. This document addresses three issues: a) current observerships; b) procedure and timeframe for adoption of an outreach strategy by the Committee for Agriculture; and c) criteria for consideration of non-member participation.

I. New Council Resolution on the Participation of Non-Members

2. The new Council Resolution adopted on July 8, 2004 [C(2004)132/FINAL] takes a more pro-active approach to the participation of non-members in the work of the Organisation, emphasising that the Council or Committees should now take the initiative. As in the past, expressions of interest from non-members to participate in Committees may also be addressed formally to the Secretary General or arise during informal discussions with Committee Secretariats.

3. In all cases, decisions will be based on how the proposed non-members fit into a Committee’s outreach strategy. It is understood that the strategies are not static, but will adapt in light of the Committee’s evolving programme of work. Thus, the number and mix of non-member participants may change over time.

4. Committees need to consider the best means of integrating non-members, whether it is as a full participant, an observer, or through some other form of co-operation. In addition, Committee Chairs are requested to provide information on the general performance of their non-member observers once a year in the form of an informal letter to the CCN Chair. An evaluation of a non-member’s performance should take place when the invitation is due to expire based on a template to be provided by the CCNM. This information would be sent to the CCN Chair, via the CCNM, accompanied by the recommendation whether or not to renew the invitation.

II. Status of Current Observerships

5. Through a written procedure in 2003, the Committee for Agriculture recommended to the CCN that current observer invitations to participate in the work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies be extended through December 2005. However, in anticipation of the development of an OECD-wide strategy on outreach and enlargement, the Council agreed to renew all observers that had been recommended for renewal by Committees for one year only, i.e. until the end of 2004.

6. The Chair of the CCN now invites Committees to renew, for another year, its current observers, the invitations which otherwise expire at the end of 2004, (Argentina, Brazil and Chile as well as the Russian Federation in the Commodity Groups), pending the development of the Committee’s outreach strategy. Participation of all observers in the work of the Committee will then need to be reconsidered in light of this new strategy, as required by the Resolution. Thailand’s pending request to participate in the work of the Committee will also be evaluated at that time within the framework of the Committee’s strategy.
III. Defining a Pro-Active Outreach Strategy

7. It is proposed to develop a pro-active outreach strategy for the Committee for Agriculture and its subsidiary bodies in three stages over the next 12 months:

- **Agreement on Strategy Guidelines (end March 2005):** The first step is to seek agreement on the interpretation/elaboration of the strategy guidelines provided by Council in the context of the Committee’s activities (i.e. defining benefit and influence of non-members, appropriate number of participants, etc.). Following the Committee discussion on December 1, 2004 of the proposed strategy guidelines included in this document, the Secretariat will issue a draft of revised guidelines for approval under the written procedure by the end of March 2005.

- **Elaboration of a Pro-Active Outreach Strategy (end June 2005):** Based on the agreed guidelines, the Secretariat will prepare and circulate, for consideration by member countries, the draft of a pro-active outreach strategy that would include a short list suggesting non-members whose participation could enhance the achievement of the Committee’s mandate and programme of work. The specific type of participation (status, committee/subsidiary body, activity) for each non-member would also be identified. Member countries would have the opportunity to submit comments in written form with the Secretariat revising the strategy as necessary.

- **Committee Recommendations (5-6 December 2005):** At its 5-6 December 2005 meeting, the Committee for Agriculture would be asked to a) discuss and approve the Committee’s outreach strategy b) review and provide a recommendation on the current request by Thailand for observership and c) evaluate and provide recommendations on existing non-member observerships (Brazil, Chile, Argentina) in light of the Committee’s pro-active outreach strategy and their performance to date.

IV. Observership Criteria for the Committee for Agriculture

8. In 2003, the Secretary-General invited all chairs of OECD committees to develop guidelines for the application of the observership criteria, in response to an initiative launched by the CCN on how committees manage the responsibilities conferred to them by the Council Resolution on non-member participation in OECD work. The Resolution recommended that interpretation of the “major player” and “mutual benefit” criteria should be quantified, as appropriate. The Committee for Agriculture discussed proposed guidelines [AGR/CA/2003/7] at its meeting on 21-22 May 2003.

9. There was general support for the guidelines developed by the Secretariat for applying the “major player” and “mutual benefit” criteria, recognizing however that there remained subjective elements in a decision to grant observer status to requesting countries and that flexibility was needed on a case-by-case basis. A number of delegates noted the need for more diversified non–member participation across a number of dimensions (e.g. geographically, level of development, importers vs. exporters, different policy approaches, ties to OECD countries).

10. Based on this earlier work, the subsequent Committee discussion and the new guidelines provided in the latest Council Resolution, a number of elements are proposed below for consideration by the Committee in the development of its pro-active outreach strategy. Specific recommendations concerning individual non-members would then be based on this strategy. The over arching consideration should be one of mutual benefit – that both OECD member countries and participating non-members can learn from working together.
V. Outreach Strategy Guidelines

11. The outreach strategy should be driven by clear objectives, flexibility and a case-by-case approach. The overall objectives are to share policy experiences between members and non-members, to increase non-member awareness of OECD policy goals and principles, and to seek greater convergence on policy issues. No one criterion should be sufficient justification to include or exclude a prospective non-member participant from the strategy. Any recommendation from the Committee for Agriculture should be based on the overall relevance and contribution of the targeted non-members to Committee activities as judged across the suite of considerations listed below:

**Guideline a) whether non-member participation would facilitate appreciably the achievement of the mandate and the programme of work of the subsidiary body concerned;**

The Committee should identify the reasons why non-members should be engaged in its work in light of its mandate and work programme, i.e., source of information, analytical expertise, policy experience, programme recipient. The importance of non-members, in terms of production and/or consumption of agricultural and food products of specific interest to OECD countries and the links through trade with OECD countries (i.e., volume of exports/imports, agri-environmental impacts, trade integration, role in WTO coalitions and regional trade agreements), should be important considerations. Quantitative measures such as proportion of world production/consumption, agro-food trade balance with OECD countries, etc. should be examined.

**Guideline b) whether and in what ways association of non-members with its work would be of benefit to the Organisation including in fulfilling its mandate of contributing to the development of non-members;**

The Committee should consider the extent to which non-members have, or are willing to, share data, information and policy experience/analysis. Evidence of past co-operation and participation in OECD agricultural outreach activities provides a useful indicator although it should be recognised that such involvement is often restricted by a lack of funding rather than a lack of interest. The capacity of non-members to actively participate and make a substantive contribution, and benefit from the Committee’s work should be a critical factor.

**Guideline c) whether economic growth and/or the welfare of members, considered on a national, regional or global basis, within the substantive area covered by the subsidiary body concerned are influenced to a significant degree by the policy orientations of non-members;**

The Committee should consider the extent to which economic growth and/or the viability of the agro-food sector of members is influenced by the policy orientations of the non-members i.e., market access, export subsidies, domestic support, regulatory regimes. As noted in the Council guidelines, the impact of a non-member’s policies on an individual OECD member state, or indeed on a region, should not be of itself sufficient justification for that non-member’s participation in an OECD body. National or regional impact should be merely one element in the analysis which Committees go through in drawing up a strategy.

1. The new Council guidelines are provided in Annex I of C(2004)132/FINAL. These guidelines provide direction on both who should attend and on the appropriate numbers of non-member participants. The Council will assess recommendations by Committees and retains the final decision on the invitation of non-members to participate as regular observers or full participants to subsidiary bodies.
Guideline d) in relation to the substantive area covered by the mandate of the subsidiary body concerned, the degree to which non-members' institutional and policy know-how contributes significantly to OECD peer learning/influencing and rule-making processes;

The Committee should consider the extent to which the stated objectives policy approaches and institutional framework of the potential non-member observer are of interest to OECD countries; i.e., the extent to which the policy reform experiences of the observer country would contribute to OECD peer learning. Expressed interest on the part of the non-member observer in the shared goals, policy principles and operational criteria for policy measures, as agreed by OECD Ministers, should also be considered.

Guideline e) the appropriate number of non-member participants, focusing both on the non-members and the time period of the invitations in light of the requirements of the mandate of the subsidiary body concerned, its programme of work and its methods of work;

The Committee should consider the appropriate number of non-member participants; i.e., the balance in the representation of non-members, in terms of exporters/importers, different policy concerns and approaches, high/low levels of support, developing/developed countries and regional composition. Where participation is deemed of mutual benefit in the context of a specific element of the work programme, the invitation should specify the activity and the duration of the participation.

Guideline f) the consequences that non-members’ participation might have on the working methods, programme of work and Secretariat resources devoted to the subsidiary body concerned;

The Committee should consider the possible positive and negative consequences of participating non-members; i.e., improved access to information, broader policy perspectives, increased Secretariat workload, meeting room capacity. Care must be taken to ensure the participation of non-members does not unduly impede the ability of the Committee to reach decisions and to achieve a timely conclusion to its various work programme activities. The Committee should consider inviting non-member participation for specific activities where their interests and expertise would be particularly beneficial. For example, the annual monitoring/PSE activity would benefit from participation of the new non-OECD EU accession countries.

Guideline g) in the case of full participants, the non-member has been found to be willing and able to commit to the relevant OECD acquis, as appropriate;

Full participation may now be granted [C(2004)132/FINAL Annex II, paragraph 6] for a limited duration where it would provide greater mutual benefit than observership (e.g. within the framework of negotiating an OECD instrument, specific Committee activities). Non-members who are not observers or full participants may be invited, on an ad hoc basis, to participate in a meeting or part of a meeting.2

2. A number of options exist for the participation of non-members: full participant; regular observer; ad hoc observer (i.e. specific agenda items or work activity). Council Doc. C(2004)132/FINAL advises that Committee recommendations for full participation or regular observer should be made sparingly and that they are subject to further consideration and final decision by Council.
Guideline h) a consideration of the full range of vehicles to engage non-members in the work of the Organisation and the subsidiary body concerned, as well as the limits and forms of the participation of non-members which appear desirable and most useful, to maximise the benefits and reduce any disadvantages;

For all invitations originating from the Committee, first consideration should be given to whether participation in OECD outreach activities (e.g. Global Forum on Agriculture, specific issue workshops, regional events) would be of greater mutual benefit than observership in the Committee for Agriculture and its subsidiary bodies. Recommendations for observership should consider whether participation in specific activities for a limited duration would be more appropriate. These options should be reviewed periodically by the Committee for Agriculture on the basis of experience and changing conditions.