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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade

Original: Spanish

**REQUEST FOR THE SUSPENSION OF THE PROCESSES AND ENTRY INTO FORCE OF
REDUCTIONS OF MAXIMUM RESIDUE LEVELS (MRLs) FOR PLANT PROTECTION
PRODUCTS IN LIGHT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

COMMUNICATION FROM ARGENTINA, BENIN, BURKINA FASO, CABO VERDE, COLOMBIA,
COSTA RICA, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, CUBA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, ECUADOR, EGYPT, EL SALVADOR,
THE GAMBIA, GHANA, GUATEMALA, GUINEA, GUINEA BISSAU, HONDURAS, ISRAEL, KENYA,
LIBERIA, MALI, NICARAGUA, NIGER, NIGERIA, PAKISTAN, PANAMA, PARAGUAY, PERU, SENEGAL,
SIERRA LEONE, SOUTH AFRICA AND TOGO

Revision

The following communication, received on 10 June 2020, is being circulated at the request of the above-mentioned delegations.

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1. The COVID-19 pandemic is the biggest global challenge in recent history, which has forced WTO Members to focus their efforts on protecting people's lives, ensuring public health, and guaranteeing food security for their populations. This challenge is greater for developing countries, which generally lack the financial and health resources required to address it adequately. Therefore, international cooperation in all areas is crucial for tackling the crisis and laying the groundwork for a swift economic recovery in the post-pandemic period.
 2. Along these lines, we acknowledge the commitment of several Members, including the European Union (EU), to ensuring the proper functioning of global agricultural and food supply chains in response to the crisis, including through the non-implementation of unjustified barriers to trade.
 3. Given that millions of people rely on international trade for their food security and livelihoods, measures that facilitate trade will have a significant impact in the fight against the pandemic and its consequences. Such measures will also help to ensure the flow of food and other agricultural products, protect the food security of the most vulnerable populations, and provide predictability for importers and exporters, thereby ensuring that production chains continue to operate sustainably and preventing further job losses and disruptions to supply.
 4. Under the current circumstances, the implementation of certain sanitary and phytosanitary measures that create additional restrictions or burdens on international trade in animals, plants or plant products constitutes a challenge that hampers worldwide economy recovery efforts, especially in developing countries. Agricultural producers, particularly the smallest, and MSMEs would be greatly affected by new measures and more restrictive requirements for exports, such as the reduction of Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) for plant protection products.
 5. We recognize that Members have the right to determine the appropriate level of sanitary or phytosanitary protection necessary to protect human, animal and plant life and health, and to establish measures to that end. However, such measures must be science-based and should not create unnecessary barriers to trade.

6. In light of this, and given that the EU is the largest common market in the world and the largest importer of fruits and vegetables, we request that, for a period of 12 months, it suspend all review processes currently underway for MRLs, as well as the entry into force of the all MRL reductions planned for 2020.

7. During the pandemic and the subsequent recovery period, this request will enable: (i) Members, especially developing countries, to focus their efforts on addressing the pandemic and its effects; (ii) producers, particularly the smallest and most vulnerable, to continue to trade their products, guaranteeing the flow and supply of food worldwide; and (iii) Members to ensure their effective participation and the full exercise of their rights in the WTO, given that it is impossible to continue with day-to-day work in the Organization until further notice.

8. Lastly, we urge all Members currently in the process of reviewing or modifying MRLs, with a view to establishing more restrictive levels, to also consider these requests and to base their MRLs on international standards, guidelines and recommendations.
