

Country: Guyana

Background:

Official name: National Committee on Trade Facilitation (NCTF)

Year of establishment: 09.04.2015 00:00:00

Motivation for its establishment: Compliance with Article 23.2 of the WTO-TFA

Other national bodies dealing with WTO issues and/or with Trade Facilitation: YES. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has policy responsibility for Foreign trade policy and WTO matters and is supported by several trade-related agencies such as the Ministries of Agriculture, Finance and Business, the Guyana Revenue Authority (Customs) and Guyana National Bureau of Standards inter alia. Several regulatory bodies, led by the Customs, handle TF matters and these bodies are members of the National Committee.

Former multi-agency group/committee: NO. However, two other bodies were relevant to the establishment of the NCTF, namely

(i) the existing National Advisory Committee on External (Trade) Negotiations (NACEN) which is an inter-agency body established in September 1997, chaired by the Minister of Foreign Trade and comprising high-level representation from various public and private sector agencies; and

(ii) a high-level public-private sector body, called the Trade Transactions Public Private Dialogue Body (TT-PPDB), established in December 2009 under the National Competitiveness Strategy (NCS) with a mandate to improve the competitiveness of Guyana's economy and its businesses by reducing the time and cost involved in the processing of import and export of goods.

The TT-PPDB was chaired by a senior private sector Executive and was composed of the Private Sector Commission (umbrella private sector body), the Shipping Association of Guyana, the Guyana Customs Brokers Association, the Customs and Trade Administration (CTA) of the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) and Licensing bodies (consulted as needed). The TT-PPDB ended operations in keeping with its project life. However, the membership of the NCTF mirrors closely that of the TT-PPDB.

Current status of the working group (running, pilot phase, not functioning, etc): Fully operational (running)

Institutional Framework:

Degree of institutionalisation: Cabinet's approval - CP (2015) 3:5:S dated April 1, 2015, Guyana Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedures for the Committee

Type of organisation (ad hoc group, legal entity/organisation, etc): The National Committee was established by the Cabinet to facilitate Guyana's implementation of the TFA (as required under Art. 23.2 of the TFA).

Coordinating agency: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (responsible for WTO matters) and the Guyana Revenue Authority (responsible Customs Administration matters)

Scope/mandate: See Terms of Reference attached

Terms of reference: Yes.

Working structure of the group: Chaired by the Guyana Revenue Authority (Customs) with the direct/secretariat support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Permanent technical secretariat: No.

The Committee is jointly coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (with responsibility for Trade Policy, including WTO matters) and the Guyana Revenue Authority (with responsibility for Custom Administration). As such, the shared resources of the two agencies are applied in the operations the committee. This obviates the need for additional resources towards a formal secretariat.

Funding:

Budget: No. The work of the Committee is facilitated under the normal budgetary arrangements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Guyana Revenue Authority, respectively.

Sources of funding: Not applicable

Items covered by the budget: Not applicable

Objectives / Focus:

Objectives: To coordinate inter-agency dialogue on matters related to the effective implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Working plan: Actions are taken based on the outcomes of Meetings of the National Committee. The work of the National Committee is also informed by the relevant decisions and information emanating from the WTO Committee on Trade Facilitation.

Monitoring and evaluation: It is thought that to the extent of 100% the NTFC fulfils its role of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Monitoring tools: Consultations with stakeholders. Continuous monitoring is carried out by the various border agencies that are members of the NTFC. This monitoring is also directly influenced by any specific timelines under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Evaluation tools: Focus groups - (i) Report back sessions at the NTFC meetings; and (ii) Continuous informal engagements by the lead coordinating agencies of the NTFC.

Familiar with the indicator of the World Bank Doing Business Trading Across Borders.

Familiar with the following tools to some extent: World Bank Logistics Performance Index (LPI) and

World Economic Forum Global Enabling Trade Report.

Reporting form and supervisory authority: The TF body is accountable to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (with responsibility for WTO matters) and the Commissioner-General of the Guyana Revenue Authority (Customs Administration). .

Membership / Composition:

Public or quasi-public agencies:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Foreign Trade) and the Guyana Revenue Authority
Ministry of Agriculture;
Guyana Customs Brokers Association;
Shipping Association of Guyana;
Ministry of Tourism, Industry & Commerce;
Guyana National Bureau of Standards;
Government Analyst,
Food and Drug Department,
Ministry of Public Health,
Guyana Forestry Commission

Private associations or entities: The Private Sector (Private Sector Commission; Georgetown Chamber of Commerce & Industry; and the Guyana Manufacturing & Services Association).

Level of seniority of participants: Senior-40%, Middle-50%, Junior-10%

Participation:

Frequency of meetings: On a quarterly basis, or special meetings as needed. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the GRA collaborate on a daily basis.

Level of participation: High.

Meetings format: No. The quarterly meetings, supported by the sustained collaboration between the Ministry and the GRA, have worked well so far.

Gender:

Percentage of female in the committee: About 50%. (It may be noted also that the female staff composition at both the technical and non-technical levels of the agencies represented on the NCTF are on average not less than 50%).

Chairman / President / Vice-president is female: No. However, the national TF focal point at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is female and is also the senior representative of the Ministry on the NCTF.

Comittee did decide on gender mainstreaming TF in the past: No. This is not a (necessary) remit

of the committee.

If no, why not. (Example: It not considered a priority, not considered relevant at this stage, lack of awareness, etc): Gender issues, including policy matters pertaining to women's employment, gender mainstreaming in trade and industry etc are embraced and implemented robustly at the national level, including at the level of the Parliament of Guyana.

If no, explain future plan in this area.: See above response. No plans or actions at the level of the NCTF will be necessary.

Promotion / Communication:

Communication channels to keep stakeholders informed of TF meetings: Communication is maintained electronically by email, telephone, administrative letters and meetings.

Interface with other working groups/committees on similar issues: The Committee benefits from the feedback of its members where those members might have working groups or committees related to the members' respective operations. Additionally, the Committee may co-opt other agencies at its regular meetings, as necessary

Undertake information sessions to stakeholders or general public: Some sessions are held regularly with Customs brokers, or with other stakeholders selected workshop forums hosted by the Ministry or the Customs or the Bureau of Standards.

Also publicize through the publication of articles in the press and through the website of the organisations that are members of the Committee.

The Committee has plans to undertake special information session for the general public in the near future.

Benefits:

Impact: The work of the group has been received positively so far, both in terms of the timely implementation of the WTO TFA and also as a forum for the private sector to engage with the Customs administration.

Benefits for the country's responsiveness to the WTO negotiation process: The work of the Committee has been pivotal to Guyana's implementation of the WTO TFA. Guyana has also been able Guyana to share its valuable experience with the Caribbean Community members.

Concrete operational outcomes: Improve transparency / dialogue,

Improved coordination,

Ratification / notifications of the Trade Facilitation Agreement sent to the WTO,

Improve business environment for traders,

Reduction of time and / or improvement of procedures at the border,

Reduction of costs of import, export and / or transit,

Raise awareness on the importance of trade facilitation,
Mainstreaming trade facilitation into other national policies

Lessons learned:

Success factors: It is thought that to the extent of 91% the Committee is sustainable in time. Crucial factors to the sustainability of the Committee are as follows: Cooperation among members / Common understanding and goals, Political commitment / high level support, Involvement of the private sector, Close monitoring of results, and Development of work plans and proposals

Greatest obstacles: Maintain engagement / motivation of participants / absenteeism, Personnel changes in agencies, including the private sector could affect feedback and commitment by members of the Committee.

Also, human resources constraints at the agency level would have an impact on members effective participation in the work of the Committee.

Lessons learned from your experience: Ongoing engagement/communication with members of the NCTF is important.

Future plans:

Plans for further development: Seeking technical assistance to increase the team work dynamics of the Committee and the development of a National Road Map to further the work of the Committee and to facilitate effective implementation of the Agreement.

Also, the regional integration has been considered a lot within the work of the Committee.

Contact information:

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