

Minutes of the 1st European Union-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement Committee Meeting on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

19 February 2025, 06.30-08.00 (NZ) /18 February 2025, 18.30-20.00 (EU)

Virtual meeting

The first meeting of the European Union-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (hereafter SPS Committee) was hosted by New Zealand on 19 February 2025 (NZ) /18 February 2025 (EU), in an online format. The SPS Committee was established under the provisions of the European Union-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (Chapter 6 Article 17).

The meeting was co-chaired by Steven Ainsworth, Divisional Manager Bilateral Relations & Trade from the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) New Zealand and by Caroline Boeshertz, Head of Unit, Bilateral International Relations from the Directorate General for Health and Food Safety, European Union. The list of both delegations can be found in Annex 1.

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Opening Remarks

Both sides welcomed each other and their delegations to the inaugural SPS Committee meeting. The view was shared that this forum is important for discussing and progressing sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) matters. Both sides noted the long history of technical engagement and collaboration between MPI and DG Sante. Recognition was also given to the shared values and relationships developed over many years which has contributed to the success of the European Union-New Zealand Sanitary Agreement. While the Sanitary Agreement is outside the scope of the FTA SPS Chapter, both sides agreed that the good will and spirit of cooperation under that Agreement should be echoed in the SPS Committee under the FTA. It was agreed that a strong trading relationship between New Zealand and the European Union is valued for maintaining a healthy supply chain for food and other primary products.

Agenda Item 2: Adoption of Agenda and Rules of Procedure, Confirmation of contact points

The agenda was adopted and can be found in Annex 2.

The Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the Trade Committee (Annex 24 of the FTA) were adopted. Both parties agreed that while these RoP offer the key principles to govern this committee, there are parts of the RoP that will require pragmatic interpretation to facilitate smooth implementation.

The contact points were agreed and can be found in Annex 3.

Agenda Item 3: Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

New Zealand provided a summary of the activities undertaken to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR). New Zealand takes a one-health approach to AMR and works in conjunction with New Zealand Health authorities. It was noted that while the prevalence of AMR in New Zealand animals and plants is low, it is an important matter. New Zealand outlined MPI's work including its National AMR action plan, surveillance and monitoring activities, regulatory management and official controls and public outreach and training programmes. New Zealand also summarised recent reporting on antibiotic sales with total sales declining for the past six years and 2023 figures 45% below that reported in 2017. Total quantities of critically important antibiotics also very low and 46% down since 2022.

New Zealand thanked the European Union for the fruitful technical engagement between MPI and DG Sante during the development of the EU veterinary medicines legislation. New Zealand noted it shared the European Union's objectives of managing AMR through the promotion of responsible antimicrobial stewardship in animals but that any measures should be transparent, based on sound science and in line with international trade rules and the intention of the FTA SPS Chapter.

New Zealand also noted interest in discussing further areas for collaboration on AMR with the European Union and suggested a meeting between relevant technical experts could be considered.

The European Union also summarised the main actions being undertaken against AMR. The "Council Recommendation on stepping up the European Union's actions to combat antimicrobial resistance in a One Health approach", adopted in June 2023, was referenced. The European Union has set reduction targets, including a reduction by 50% of sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and aquaculture by 2030, and is assessing progress through monitoring and surveillance. EU Member States are implementing One Health AMR National Action Plans and DG Sante is supporting Member States in that process. The European Union touched on their work relating to the environmental aspects of AMR, actions supporting research and development, and their international efforts, referring also to its plans for this year, in the context of the follow-up of the UN General Assembly Political Declaration on AMR.

Both sides agreed on the value in raising awareness of and education on AMR.

Agenda Item 4: New Zealand (EU to respond)

a. Domestic policy and legislative developments

New Zealand summarized the work to develop a Gene Technology Bill. In August 2024, the New Zealand Government announced a proposal for legislation that aimed to establish a modern flexible regulatory framework for gene technology and genetically modified organisms (GMO). The Bill has been through its first reading in Parliament and public submissions are being sought. Until the legislation is promulgated, New Zealand's position on gene technology and GMOs is unchanged. New Zealand undertook to keep the European Union abreast of developments.

b. Electronic certification

New Zealand provided an overview of work underway to refine MPI's trade certification systems into a single, integrated digital trade certification system. The new system will capture animal, plant, wine, food and organic products. New Zealand's robust controls and processes to safeguard integrity of official assurances and traceability will continue. New Zealand and the European Union discussed the collaboration to date to establish electronic exchange of phytosanitary certification. Both sides agreed that the transmission of certificates from New Zealand was operating seamlessly. Receipt of electronic certificates from some Member States was already occurring and New Zealand encouraged others to follow. The European Union commented that the technical work to establish the connection between New Zealand and those Member States using the TRACES system should be harmonised and therefore simple. New Zealand undertook to continue to update the EU as the work on electronic certification progresses.

c. Discuss pre-agreeing conditions for trade in the event of a disease outbreak or pest incursion/ "special" conditions for the entry of NZ goods

New Zealand acknowledged that under the FTA SPS Chapter both sides recognise the concepts of Pest Free Areas, Pest Free Places of Production, and Pest Free Production Sites and accept determination of those areas and the relevant official controls. New Zealand noted that the FTA SPS Chapter does not suitably cover pest outbreak situations, especially the early stages of an outbreak. New Zealand registered their interest in working with the European Union to establish principles for confirming export controls in a consistent and transparent manner to preserve trade in the event of a pest outbreak. New Zealand provided an example of work that would fall into this category, i.e. contingency arrangements for fruit fly detections and incursions in New Zealand.

The European Union considered that the recently amended International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) 4 Requirements for the establishment of pest free areas provided a sufficient framework for facilitating trade also in the early stages of a disease outbreak or pest incursion.

New Zealand undertook to consider the European Union's comments and resume this discussion with the European Union at a later date if necessary.

Agenda Item 5: European Union (NZ to respond)

a. Update on amendment of the Plant Health Regulation (EU) 2016/2031

The European Union provided an overview on recent amendments to the Plant Health Regulation (EU) 2016/2031 and forthcoming legal acts to complement certain amendments. The amendments include but are not limited to improvements to European Commission procedures, the use of additional declarations where measures have been applied to regulated non-quarantine pests, and changes to how non-compliances are notified.

The European Union explained that the relevant draft legal acts will be notified for consultation under World Trade Organisation - SPS.

New Zealand acknowledged the update on the European Union's regulation amendments and would continue to monitor any developments.

b. On-going NZ-EU exchanges - Proposed measures to manage Xylella fastidiosa on plants (G/SPS/N/NZL/777) - Treatment of pest free areas under the EU-NZ FTA

The European Union sought clarification on New Zealand's notification to World Trade Organisation of proposed changes to the management of *Xylella fastidiosa* on nursery stock, based on the already on-going written exchanges between the two sides. The European Union noted that New Zealand's current consultation documents incorrectly state that there are no European Union countries that are free from *Xylella*, it is present only in four EU Member States. Additionally, the FTA SPS Chapter states that the parties will accept each other's determinations of Pest Free Areas, Pest Free Places of Production, and Pest Free Production Sites. The European Union has provided New Zealand with the applicable legislation for *Xylella fastidiosa* in the EU, the maps of the affected areas and the audit reports of those EU Member States which have *Xylella fastidiosa* in their territories.

New Zealand acknowledged that there were some inaccuracies in the consultation document and noted that this was an opportune time while the standard was in review to receive feedback and make any necessary changes. New Zealand highlighted the significant threat that *Xylella* poses to its horticulture sector given that New Zealand is currently free of this disease. New Zealand expressed a desire to more fully understand the implementation, in affected and non-affected territories, of the European Union legislation for management of this disease as allowed for in Article 6.5 of the FTA SPS Chapter. The parties agreed that New Zealand would reply to latest email of the EU, which already provided the abovementioned information and to convene a technical meeting between their respective officials to continue this discussion.

Agenda Item 6: International Cooperation

a. Is it time to rethink ISP Ms?

New Zealand sought the European Union's support for a proposal that they will present at the next International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Commission on Phytosanitary Measures meeting in Rome (17-21 March 2025). New Zealand's proposal explores ways of improving the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) to increase readability and clarity of the core requirements. Thus far, the proposal has received strong support from the Asia and Pacific regions as well as some EU Member States that have attended earlier IPPC meetings where the proposal was discussed. DG Sante undertook to consider the proposal and discuss it with the Member States.

Agenda Item 7: Other business and closing remarks

a. Proposed future workplan items

The parties agreed that a formal workplan was not required at this time but that ad hoc engagement on special topics should occur where necessary.

b. Meeting report (incl. action items)

New Zealand, as the host, undertook to prepare the first draft of the meeting report. The draft would be reviewed and amended by the European Union before it was accepted as the final report and submitted to the secretariat for the Trade Committee.

The parties agreed the following actions:

- New Zealand to respond to the *Xylella fastidiosa* information provided by the European Union and both parties to convene a meeting between their respective technical officials to discuss management of *Xylella fastidiosa* in the European Union.
- New Zealand to keep the European Union updated on relevant policy and legislative developments.
- New Zealand to provide the European Union with the first draft of the meeting report by 25 February 2025.

c. Next committee meeting

The parties agreed that their contact points should discuss the date for the next committee meeting in late 2025.

d. Closing remarks

Both sides thanked each other for their contributions to the meeting and there was mutual agreement that the meeting has been informative and productive for all involved.

Mr. Steven Ainsworth,
Divisional Manager Bilateral Relations & Trade
Ministry for Primary Industries
New Zealand

Ms. Caroline Boeshertz, DG SANTE A5
Head of Unit Bilateral International Relations,
Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE)
European Union

Annex 2

**Agenda for the 1st EU-New Zealand FTA Committee on Sanitary and
Phytosanitary
Measures
18/19 February 2025
Virtual meeting
Host: New Zealand**

Time (NZST)	#	Agenda item
6:30am	1	Welcome and opening remarks
6:40am	2	Adoption of agenda and Rules of Procedure Confirmation of contact points
6:45am	3	Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)
6:55am	4	New Zealand (EU to respond) a. Domestic policy and legislative developments b. Electronic certification c. Discuss pre-agreeing conditions for trade in the event of a disease outbreak or pest incursion/ "special" conditions for the entry of NZ goods
7:15am	5	European Union (NZ to respond) a. Update on amendment of the Plant Health Regulation (EU) 2016/2031 b. On-going NZ-EU exchanges - Proposed measures to manage <i>Xylella fastidiosa</i> on plants (G/SPS/N/NZL/777) - Treatment of pest free areas under the EU-NZ FTA.
7:35am	6	International Cooperation a. Is it time to rethink ISPMs? (NZ item, EU to respond)
7:45am	7	Other business and closing remarks a. Proposed future workplan items b. Meeting report (incl. action items) c. Next committee meeting d. Closing remarks