

TRADE - AGRICULTURE:

The treatment of trade in agricultural goods as a "special case" under the GATT (e.g. Article XI, para. 2(c)) has long concerned the Australian government. As long ago as 1955 the U.S. obtained a waiver from the GATT provisions in respect of certain assistance to the export of surpluses: 3 BISD 32 (1955). Apart from import restrictions and the granting of subsidies to exports, the Australian government fears that countries, such as Japan, which in balance of payment surplus may be prevailed upon to "correct" that balance by agricultural agreements discriminatory to Australia. The Media Release of 14 March 1984 No. 84/13 of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade is an example of the position frequently adopted by Australian governments:

Mr Kerin and I called in the Japanese Ambassador this morning to express our concern about the Japanese attitude to future Australian beef exports to Japan.

Negotiations were held in Tokyo last week between Australian and Japanese officials on future levels of Japanese imports of beef. The Japanese response was disappointing.

We told the Ambassador that the Australian Government is particularly concerned about the recent press reports coming from Tokyo purporting to show the future growth in Japanese imports from Australia and USA. If the press reports are reasonably accurate they indicate a disturbing discrimination against Australia by Japan. They are not in accord with recent assurances given to the Prime Minister by the Japanese Prime Minister.

In the joint Prime Ministerial Press Statement, released in Tokyo on 1 February 1984, the Japanese side confirmed "that it has no intention of dealing with the trade problems with third countries at the expense of Australia."

The Japanese Ambassador said that he had been informed from Tokyo that the press reports referred to did not represent an official Japanese position but rather were press speculation.

Mr Kerin and I told the Japanese Ambassador that all that Australia is seeking is a fair-go in the Japanese market. The Ambassador undertook to convey this view to Tokyo.