

Agricultural Advisory Committees for Trade

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Introduction

The Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee (APAC) for Trade and six Agricultural Technical Advisory Committees (ATACs) for Trade are a formal way to ensure ongoing discussions between the federal government and stakeholders about agricultural trade issues. The committees are jointly administered by the Secretary of Agriculture and the U.S. Trade Representative and authorized by the Trade Act of 1974, as amended.

The APAC and the ATACs consult with, advise, and make recommendations to the Secretary and the U.S. Trade Representative about a wide range of agricultural trade issues. These issues include U.S. negotiating objectives and bargaining positions before the United States enters into trade agreements; the operation of existing trade agreements; and other matters related to the development, implementation, and administration of U.S. agricultural trade policy.

The APAC provides policy advice about all agricultural trade issues, while the ATACs provide technical advice and information on specific commodities. The advisory committees are:

- Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee
- ATAC for Trade in Animals and Animal Products
- ATAC for Trade in Fruits and Vegetables
- ATAC for Trade in Grains, Feed, Oilseeds, and Planting Seeds
- ATAC for Trade in Processed Foods
- ATAC for Trade in Sweeteners and Sweetener Products
- ATAC for Trade in Tobacco, Cotton, and Peanuts

Background

The APAC and the ATACs were formed in 1974, when Congress established a private sector advisory committee system to ensure that U.S. trade policy and trade negotiation objectives adequately reflect U.S. commercial and economic interests. Private sector agricultural advisors were first used on an ad hoc basis in the Kennedy Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) as part of the U.S. policy development and review process during the multilateral trade negotiations of the 1960's.

The Trade Act of 1974 included a formal mechanism for agricultural advisory committees. They proved to be so successful during the 1979 Tokyo Round of GATT multilateral trade negotiations that the legislation to implement the agreements of the Tokyo Round included a provision to continue gathering advice from the private sector through advisory committees.

Today the private sector trade advisory system consists of 28 committees, arranged in three tiers: The President's Advisory Committee on Trade and

Policy Negotiations; five policy advisory committees, including the APAC; and more than 22 technical advisory committees, including the six ATACs. The Departments of Commerce and Labor also administer policy and technical or sectoral committees.

Meeting and Membership

Members of the APAC and ATACs are appointed to the advisory committees by, and serve at the discretion of, the Secretary of Agriculture and the U.S. Trade Representative.

Candidates for membership may apply at any time. Individuals with a demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women, or persons with disabilities are especially encouraged to apply so that the committees more closely reflect the diversity of the population USDA serves. Appointments will be made on a periodic basis.

The advisory committees must represent a balance among varied interests. ATAC members must have commodity expertise and knowledge of the effects that various trade barriers—or the lack of barriers—can have on the commodities they represent. All members should be recognized leaders in their fields, and be able to represent those interests fully and professionally.

Due to the sensitive nature of the issues discussed, committee meetings are generally closed to the public and all members are required to obtain a security clearance at the secret level. Meetings are held at USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C., or by teleconference.

The committees meet, on average, two times per year, but meetings may be called more often. Committee members serve at their own expense, are not compensated for their services, and do not receive per diem or travel funds.

More Information

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Membership information is located at

<http://www.fas.usda.gov/itp/apac-atacs/advisorycommittees.asp>

General information about FAS programs, resources, and services is available on the Internet at the FAS home page: <http://www.fas.usda.gov>.

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