

1 ARTICLE 39 OF THE AGREEMENT ON TRADE-RELATED ASPECTS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS.....1

1.1 Text of Article 39.....1

1.2 General.....1

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Article 39

1. In the course of ensuring effective protection against unfair competition as provided in Article 10bis of the Paris Convention (1967), Members shall protect undisclosed information in accordance with paragraph 2 and data submitted to governments or governmental agencies in accordance with paragraph 3.

2. Natural and legal persons shall have the possibility of preventing information lawfully within their control from being disclosed to, acquired by, or used by others without their consent in a manner contrary to honest commercial practices¹⁰ so long as such information:

- (a) is secret in the sense that it is not, as a body or in the precise configuration and assembly of its components, generally known among or readily accessible to persons within the circles that normally deal with the kind of information in question;
- (b) has commercial value because it is secret; and
- (c) has been subject to reasonable steps under the circumstances, by the person lawfully in control of the information, to keep it secret.

3. Members, when requiring, as a condition of approving the marketing of pharmaceutical or of agricultural chemical products which utilize new chemical entities, the submission of undisclosed test or other data, the origination of which involves a considerable effort, shall protect such data against unfair commercial use. In addition, Members shall protect such data against disclosure, except where necessary to protect the public, or unless steps are taken to ensure that the data are protected against unfair commercial use.

(footnote original) ¹⁰ For the purpose of this provision, "a manner contrary to honest commercial practices" shall mean at least practices such as breach of contract, breach of confidence and inducement to breach, and includes the acquisition of undisclosed information by third parties who knew, or were grossly negligent in failing to know, that such practices were involved in the acquisition.

1.2 General

1. Paragraph 4 of the Ministerial Decision on the TRIPS Agreement, adopted on 17 June 2022, states:

"4. Recognizing the importance of the timely availability of and access to COVID-19 vaccines, it is understood that Article 39.3 of the Agreement does not prevent an eligible Member from enabling the rapid approval for use of a COVID-19 vaccine produced under this Decision."¹

Current as of: June 2024

¹ [WT/L/1141](#), para. 4.