

THE IMPACT OF TTIP ON FARMERS, CONSUMERS AND FOOD SAFETY RULES

/ THE VALUE
ADDED TO
EUROPEAN
AGRICULTURE
IS ACTUALLY
EXPECTED TO
FALL BY 0.5%

/ GROWTH
IN EXPORTS
DOES NOT
NECESSARILY
LEAD TO
INCREASED
BENEFITS
FOR
EUROPEAN
FARMERS

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the European Union (EU) and the United States (US) could have a considerable impact on the way in which food and commodities are produced, traded and regulated, with impacts for farmers and for consumers on both sides of the Atlantic.

US trade negotiators have been clear that they want to use TTIP to increase access to European markets.¹ US agri-businesses have been lobbying to remove the current restrictions that have been introduced to protect European consumers, which result from fundamentally different approaches to food safety regulation.

Changes in food and farming policy are particularly controversial given that they affect consumer choice, and they also shape agricultural landscape, affecting how farmers farm and the crops and produce they sell. Food and agricultural policy impacts on rural economies and employment opportunities in remote areas.

WHAT DOES TTIP MEAN FOR EU FARMERS?

Increased competition for European farmers

Analysis of the likely consequences of reducing the non-tariff barriers between the EU and the US, and phasing out tariff protection, would increase exports of European produce to the US (benefiting cheap poultry meat producers for example), but this would have little overall impact on the size of the agricultural sector. The value added to European agriculture is actually expected to fall by 0.5%. This is because the increases in exports would be cancelled out as EU farmers lose market share to US imports.²

While European dairy exporters' access to US markets would be likely to increase if restrictions on raw milk imports were lifted, the increased competition could result in lower income for dairy farmers. Poultry and beef farmers would also face increased competition from reduced tariffs, and farmers breeding suckler cows would be likely to be adversely affected. Cereal producers would also be at a disadvantage.³ So it can be seen that growth in exports does not necessarily lead to increased benefits for European farmers.

Unfair competition from lower standards

If trade barriers are removed without regulatory convergence (ie existing standards would remain in place on both sides of the Atlantic), European farmers would face extra regulatory costs compared to US farmers.

WHAT DOES TTIP MEAN FOR EUROPEAN CONSUMERS?

Risk of lower food safety standards

The US Department for Agriculture is demanding better market access for food that has been produced with substances prohibited in the EU. They see a number of rules as trade barriers, including bans on meat rinses and hormone treated beef. They also claim that the EU's authorisation system for genetically modified food is a trade barrier. Any imports of such US produce would be of particular concern if EU food safety protection measures were reduced to comply with TTIP, as has been

proposed in the guise of regulatory harmonisation.⁴ While the risk to human health should not be overstated, this would undermine the use of precautionary principle in European food safety regulation and raise serious concerns for consumers.⁵

Risk of GMO products on supermarket shelves

Changes to the regulations affecting imports of genetically modified food and feed into Europe would be a major cause of concern, with a number of European states and the majority of food businesses seeking to ban or avoid GMOs from imports. European safety standards for GM food are much higher than those in the US, and under the current 'zero tolerance' rule only GMOs authorised in Europe are allowed to be marketed. Industry groups representing US soy farmers, corn farmers and the biotech industry are demanding a change in these rules.⁶

TTIP could open the door to allow for non-authorized GM contamination of food or seeds, with the possible introduction of permitted thresholds for levels of GM contamination, undermining the zero tolerance protection. Efforts to introduce new regulations or tighten standards for GMOs would be likely to be blocked.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Friends of the Earth Europe rejects any trade deal that undermines European food safety and threatens sustainable food production in the European Union.

Friends of the Earth Europe recommends to member states, regional and local governments to fully analyse and make public the real impacts of TTIP on the farming sector, in particular from increased imports of cheaper foods and commodities from the US. In addition Governments should assess the real costs of any lowering of food standards in terms of human, environmental and economic impacts.

National governments should call on the European Commission to fully assess and publicise the impacts of TTIP on the EU farming sector as a whole and call on them to halt trading other sectors against better market access for US farming products.

/ TTIP COULD
OPEN THE
DOOR TO
ALLOW FOR
NON-
AUTHORISED
GM CONTAM-
INATION OF
FOOD OR
SEEDS

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¹ <http://www.fas.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2014-04/tpa-ttip.pdf>

² http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/514007/AGRI_IPOL_STU%282014%29514007_EN.pdf

³ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/514007/AGRI_IPOL_STU%282014%29514007_EN.pdf

⁴ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/514007/AGRI_IPOL_STU%282014%29514007_EN.pdf

⁵ <http://www.foeeurope.org/briefing-gm-food-eu-us-trade-deal-290914>

⁶ <http://www.regulations.gov/#!searchResults;rpp=50;so=DESC;sb=postedDate;po=200;a=USTR;cmd=01%257C01%257C13-06%257C30%257C13>