

Publications

Chapter 17: Codex Alimentarius at Home and Abroad: The Regulatory Costs of Developing and Implementing International and National Food-Safety Standards

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Food supply chains are increasingly global. Food commodities and products are susceptible to biological, chemical, physical, and environmental hazards potentially harmful to consumers at each step in these supplies. Governments rely on the rules, standards, and guidelines memorialized in the Codex Alimentarius Commission to ensure the safety of food products being traded. The Commission's priority is harmonizing science-based national food-safety regulations that do not unnecessarily burden global trade.

Harmonization of food-safety regulations, however, comes at a cost. Governments endeavoring to regulate food safety in novel ways may be at odds with the requirements of international trade agreements, namely the SPS Agreement, which incorporates Codex Alimentarius food-safety measures into it. Noncompliance threatens the self-determination of governments and communities. Moreover, as this chapter discusses, efforts to harmonize the food-safety regulatory landscape globally can contradict the will and goals of individual trade members and their people.

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