

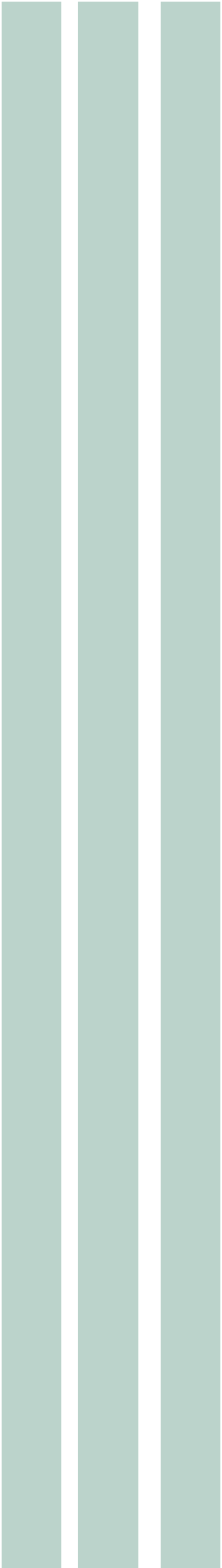
Markets, Rights and Equity: Food and Agricultural Standards in a Shrinking World

**Recommendations
from an
International
Workshop**



Institute for Food and Agricultural Standards
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



Markets, Rights and Equity: Food and Agricultural Standards in a Shrinking World

Recommendations from an International Workshop



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Preface

The worldwide reduction of tariff barriers has dramatically increased world trade in both fresh and processed agricultural commodities. Producers and processors around the world are now in direct competition with one another. Moreover, membership in the World Trade Organization brings with it agreements to “harmonize” grades and standards around the world. Each nation is required to adhere to the same or equivalent sets of standards for commodities traded internationally. “Harmonizing” or creating international standards to which all parties engaged in international trade agree has become a key feature of this new global phenomenon.

The system of food and agricultural standards that has grown over the past century sets the “rules of the game” for buyer/seller relations within and between industries, and between industry and consumers/citizens. This standards system is likely to change markedly in the next decade. As it changes, crops and livestock production areas will shift geographically. Global standards do not necessarily make for standardization. Indeed, in part in response to consumer demand and in part to maintain visibility, agrifood companies are engaging in numerous forms of product differentiation. As they do so, contracting with producers for specific raw product qualities will become more common. Clearly, standards issues will be a central feature of the agrifood system for the foreseeable future.

To discuss these issues on “neutral soil”, 70 participants from 22 nations were brought together for an invitational international workshop at Michigan State University October 31 - November 3, 1999. The workshop was hosted by the Institute for Food and Agricultural Standards (IFAS) at Michigan State University. This three-day workshop brought together a variety of stakeholders to analyze standards setting and implementation and its effects in this new context, and to develop policy recommendations designed to produce an effective, equitable and transparent food and agricultur-

al standards system for the 21st century. **This document represents the informed consensus of those who participated in that endeavor. It does not necessarily represent the views of the employers of those persons, the sponsors of the workshop or the Institute for Food and Agricultural Standards.**

The workshop was made possible by the generous support of the Farm Foundation, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, the Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA) of France and Michigan State University. MSU sponsors included the Office of the Provost, the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the College of Social Science, the National Food Safety and Toxicology Center, the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station, Michigan State University Extension, and the departments of Agricultural Economics, Resource Development and Sociology. We are indebted to them for their support.

Finally, numerous persons helped to organize the participants’ comments in a manner easily read by those who did not attend the workshop. Jennifer Battle, Sherilyn Bienvenida, Holly Dygert, Sabrina Genter, Ivan Ivanov, David Randels, Andile Siyengo, Patricia Aust Sterns and Michelle Worosz each helped in a variety of ways during the workshop. Gerad Middendorf and Elizabeth Ransom helped to record and compile the comments of participants and draft this document. Rachel Martel helped immensely in organizing the details of the workshop itself. Kevin Kennedy clarified numerous points of law. Thanks go to each of these persons.

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Executive Summary

From October 31 - November 3, 1999, the Institute for Food and Agricultural Standards (IFAS) at Michigan State University hosted a workshop that brought together 70 participants from 22 nations. The workshop consisted of several plenary sessions where perspectives on standards were presented and working group sessions at which key issues were identified and policy recommendations were developed. During the workshop, participants analyzed standards setting, implementation and the effects of standards in the new context of increased agricultural trade and lower trade barriers. The charge to the working groups was to develop policy recommendations designed to produce effective, equitable and transparent standards for the 21st century food and agricultural system.

The major recommendations that emerged from the workshop are:

International Standards Setting Process. More democratic mechanisms are needed to incorporate the views, priorities and voices of all stakeholders into the standards-setting and enforcement process. Standards setting, including the work of international standards setting bodies (e.g., Codex, OECD, UNECE, ISO [see Table 1]), needs to become more transparent and democratic. Public inquiry and accountability of international organizations should be strengthened so that all stakeholders, particularly producers, can more easily discern emerging standards. Moreover, clear lines of responsibility and collaboration among international standards organizations should be instituted.

Revisions to the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). A procedural framework needs to be created that can address the differences in and diversity among products and processes. Though scientific analysis is essential, it alone is inadequate to resolve disputes. Therefore, the SPS and TBT agreements should be revised to incorporate historical, social, cultural and ethical considerations and principles as well as scientific considerations. Also, ways are needed to assess and characterize known and unknown risks and uncertainty as well as to avoid risk where possible, and to manage and communicate risk to all stakeholders throughout the process. Finally, the dispute mechanisms should incorporate issues raised by both exporters and importers.

Complementary Private Sector Involvement.

Private sector and governmental standards setting should complement each other. Acknowledgment must be given to the growth of both private standards, driven by company specifications in contract farming, and public standards, driven by changes in consumer and retail demand.

Knowledge about Standards. Knowledge of standards is generally lacking. Research should be undertaken to assist people and groups working to promote equitable standards setting. The natural and social sciences should play a role in standards setting, but citizens must retain the autonomy to determine what risks are acceptable. In particular, studies are needed on impact assessment of standards, changes in standards policies, the interface between public and private standards setting, the social and economic costs of complying with emerging standards, the role of science in standards setting and risk assessment, and the interface between concerns raised by groups in industrialized and developing nations.

Introduction

Today, the discussion of agriculture and food standards occurs within the context of a rapidly changing global market. Agriculture and food products have always traveled globally — e.g., the spice trade — but the amount and the scope of global trade have increased substantially in this century. Multiple perspectives exist on the role of standards in the global economy. Some view standards as instruments of neoliberal structural adjustment policies, and standardization as an expression and/or instrument of on-going trade liberalization. Others see standards as a way to reduce transaction costs and build trust. Another view is that standards are established to tackle difficult problems such as food safety hazards — e.g., *Listeria* — and to coordinate complex food systems.

Beyond the overall purposes of standards are specific questions about standards creation and adherence. Should market forces and industries and/or governmental institutions and states be the main standard-setting and -enforcing bodies? Should standards be specific to the product or the process, or both — e.g., 100 percent cotton shirts and/or fair labor practices during production of the shirt? What is the role for science in standards setting — e.g., what percentage and type of bacteria are safe in a food product? How are ethical decisions made — e.g., what level of risk is acceptable in a given product or process? How is risk to be fairly distributed?

Participant Concerns about Standards and World Trade

The workshop working groups identified the following concerns or problems raised by the current international system of standards setting and enforcement.

The WTO and National Standards. Since the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995, standards creation and adherence has become a major topic of debate. The Agreements on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS agreement) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT agreement) are two agreements to which all WTO members must conform.¹ A significant number of national food standards do not conform to the WTO agreements. Non-conformity raises issues of jurisdiction. Currently, the WTO has neither the mandate nor the capacity to enforce or reject national standards. In fact, the WTO is not a *de jure* enforcer of standards. Nevertheless, the WTO enforces standards *de facto* because it responds to complaints brought by member nations and determines which national standards are or are

not in conformity with international standards through dispute settlements.

Downward Harmonization of Standards. The WTO is complaint driven. In other words, a standard is scrutinized only if someone brings a complaint to the WTO. As a result, there is concern that the WTO will create downward harmonization among standards. Thus far, the WTO rulings have tended to support weaker standards. For example, if two standards differ in the amount of bacteria allowed in a particular processed food product and both are determined to be at a scientifically safe level for consumption, it appears that the WTO will support the lower standard because it is less restrictive.

The WTO — an Unrepresentative Organization. The WTO is a world organization and international forum, but it does not represent all countries and all interests. Rather, many view the WTO as dominated by the United States and powerful, corporate special interests.

¹ The SPS agreement ensures that countries apply measures to protect human and animal health (sanitary measures) and plant health (phytosanitary measures) based on scientific risk assessment. The TBT agreement covers all technical requirements and standards applied to all commodities that are not covered by the SPS agreement. (World Health Organization. 1997. Food Safety and the Globalization of Trade in Food: A Challenge to the Public Health Sector. Rome: WHO Food Safety Unit.)

Although there is a special needs clause in the WTO's governing regulations, less industrialized countries lack the financial backing and technical expertise that would allow their full participation in the WTO.² In addition, some countries have standards that do not fall within the SPS or TBT agreements (for example, animal welfare standards), and it is particularly difficult for these countries to navigate through the WTO procedures. A concern related to the lack of representation is the perception that the WTO fails to recognize production methods/processes that differ from Western, particularly U.S., methods.

Standards as Non-tariff Trade Barriers. Thus far, tariff reduction has not been a factor in the international setting. However, as quotas and tariffs decrease, many believe that standards will be increasingly used as non-tariff trade barriers. Consequently, the need for global standards organizations will increase. Now, however, current standards-setting organizations' jurisdictions need to be better defined. Which organizations should participate in setting which standards needs to be clarified (see Table 1). Furthermore, the advent of the WTO has increased concern about the lack of transparency that currently exists within international standards-setting organizations.

New Demands on Old Institutions. Most of the international standards-setting organizations were established to develop voluntary standards. With the advent of the WTO and its *de facto* ability to enforce standards through decisions in trade disputes, these international standards-setting bodies have new demands being placed on them. These organizations

have to reevaluate their mission statements, their recruitment of members, and the intended and unintended consequences that their standards have on a diverse group of actors.

Lack of Transparency. The current context in which standards are created is seen as unclear, especially by individuals at some distance from the standards-setting process, such as producers, consumers and most individuals in less industrialized countries. These individuals have few opportunities to have input in standards creation. Producers often are unaware of changes in standards until long after they are made, despite the direct impact that such standards may have on their livelihoods. Indeed, part of the confusion in standards creation and adherence is the rapid pace at which standards change. New standards are constantly displacing old ones.³

Future Outlook

Overall, the feeling is that the WTO will eventually lead to greater enforcement of standards. One obvious question then is, "What is the limit to harmonization?" Ultimately, the qualities of certain products are difficult to standardize, and countries will need to depend on bilateral negotiations. Some argue this will lead to new regional alliances and interests. For less developed countries this might be the best strategy to adopt. Indeed, the standards-setting process is viewed as having slowed down because of the negotiation that must take place now. Therefore, some see this as an opportunity for previously underrepresented groups and countries to enter standards-setting debates.

Policy Recommendations

Clearly, a great deal is at stake in the creation, implementation, enforcement and impact of food and agricultural standards. If, as their proponents assert, global markets are to improve the welfare of all, then a number of significant policy changes are necessary to

ensure that the rights of stakeholders in standards setting are protected and that standards are fair and equitable. In light of this, participants in the workshop made numerous policy recommendations:

²According to Article 4, Section 10 of the Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes: "During consultations Members should give special attention to the particular problems and interests of developing country Members."

³In addition, many terms used by international standards organizations and the WTO need further explanation. For example, the SPS and TBT agreements use the term "equivalence." There is a general view that contending interests will enlist science to support whatever viewpoint they are trying to promote. Therefore, it is not possible to rely totally on contracts, scientific evidence and specifically defined terms. Terms such as "equivalence" will always remain slightly ambiguous. Consequently, there is a need for negotiation and open dialogue among all interested parties.

International Standards Setting and Implementation

1. *Standards setting.* Standards setting should be transparent and democratic for producers, consumers and citizens. Public inquiry and accountability of international organizations should be strengthened. Governments should clearly acknowledge the roles of consumers, producers and representative bodies in the development of national and international food standards to improve transparency and engender commitment to the process. Equally important, an independent working group should be established to help developing countries obtain the technology and resources they need to participate fully in the standards-setting process. This might be done on a regional basis.
 2. *Transparency.* The work of international standards-setting bodies (e.g., FAO, Codex, OECD, ISO) needs to be coordinated so that producers can more easily discern emerging standards.
 - 2.1 More cooperation between (perhaps a merger of) competing standards agencies is needed. A joint committee across standards agencies — e.g., a consultative group — could examine ways to enhance coherence.
 - 2.2 Regional conferences and training should be established to monitor WTO activities and encourage more transparency.
 3. *Responsibility.* Clear lines of responsibility and collaboration among international standards organizations should be instituted. Cooperation and integration among standards organizations must be improved to achieve more transparency and better use of new technologies to share information. This must include transparency in the selection and role of scientists and in the assessment of risk. Moreover, the range of experts must be expanded to include social scientists. Science, however, must be viewed as one input into decision making, not a substitute for it.
 - 3.1 A regional approach to standards is needed. People should collaborate, organize locally and regionally, discuss the issues and shape their own deci-
- sions/ideas about which directions they would like to take. A critical mass of well-informed people is needed regionally. Various non-governmental organizations might well help to fill that role.
4. *Standards implementation.* Better mechanisms are needed to incorporate the views, priorities and voices of all stakeholders into the standards enforcement process. Mechanisms include reducing the cost of participation, improving conditions for consumer participation and improving the conditions of participation for developing nations. Implementation of standards should include their broad dissemination to the population. Better use of new technologies would ensure that information is shared more quickly and effectively.
 5. *Livelihoods.* Standards should allow producers to maintain their livelihoods and promote sustainable development. They should not exclude the poor from access to the market.
 6. *Improving global welfare.* Because the goal of the WTO is to improve global welfare through trade liberalization, the industrialized nations must assist the developing nations to comply with WTO rules.
 7. *Role of science.* The biophysical and social sciences should play a role in standards setting, but citizens must retain the autonomy to determine what risks are acceptable.
 8. *Impacts.* Impact assessments and evaluations of proposed standards and policies must consider regional and national differences and give special consideration to the poorest nations. Environmental, economic and cultural impacts of standards should be assessed and the costs of adoption should be borne in an equitable manner.
 9. *Traditional products.* Standards for traditional products, whether based on science or not, must be recognized. Standards setting must involve the creation of a food product registry based on geographic characteristics that can help resolve food patent disputes. Standards should include information about geocultural origins and production processes. Traditional products not geographically bound to one region, however, should be produced using world standards.

Revisions to the SPS and TBT Agreements

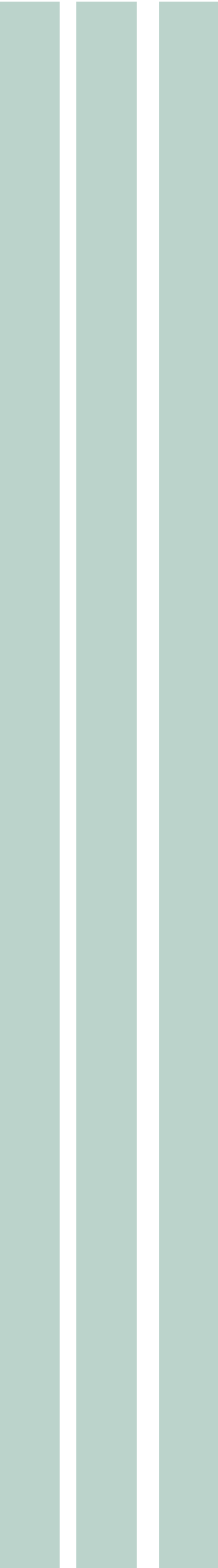
10. *Multiple dimensions of food.* A procedural framework needs to be created that can cope with the multiple dimensions of products and processes. Lessons can be learned from the ISO. The SPS and TBT agreements should be revised to incorporate historical, social, cultural and ethical considerations and principles as well as scientific considerations. They must take into account products with special cultural identity and diversity. Key issues must be incorporated into the debate and recognized as legitimate aspects of standards. These include diverse process and production methods (PPMs), animal welfare, ethical issues, and diversity of situations, needs and cultures.
11. *Precautionary principle.* The SPS agreement should be able to incorporate a precautionary principle that permits non-discriminatory standards on health grounds and gives governments the ability to take the necessary time to test a product to be assured that it is safe. This will require that application criteria for the precautionary principle be developed.
12. *Risk.* Within the procedural framework, ways are needed to assess and characterize known and unknown levels of risk and uncertainty, to avoid risk where possible, and to manage and communicate risk to all stakeholders throughout the process.
13. *Disputes.* The dispute mechanisms should incorporate issues raised by both exporters and importers. In addition, the dispute resolution mechanisms should be modified to enable economically disadvantaged litigants to participate.
 - 13.1 A means needs to be devised to allow disadvantaged participants to bring a legal action. Otherwise, the cost of litigation will remain prohibitively high.
14. *Awareness.* Politicians and policy-makers in developing nations need to be made more aware of the implications of SPS and Codex issues for the national economy.
15. *Future revisions.* In light of the points noted above, the SPS agreement should be discussed and partially revised on the basis of the discussion in the next WTO round.

Complementary Private Sector Role

16. *Private sector involvement.* Private sector and governmental standards setting should complement each other. Acknowledgment must be given to the growth of both private standards, driven by company specifications in contract farming, and public standards, driven by changes in consumer and retail demand. Both lead to a greater diversity of actors, forums and outcomes, and both require that their decisions remain complementary. Public and private standards and procedures must be better harmonized.
 - 16.1 Multinational corporations must take responsibility in proportion to their market power and maintain ethical standards as demanded by consumers and civil societies.
 - 16.2 Multinational corporations should support attempts to engage and communicate with the public and to clarify ethical concerns about standards.

Knowledge About Standards

17. *Knowledge About Standards.* Knowledge of standards is lacking. The role of science in standards setting, implementation and standards impact assessment needs to be rethought. Science has an important role to play in this arena, but it should not be considered as a final determinant. Some of the salient issues regarding science are: the process of selecting scientists for national and international standards bodies, the need to understand the differential impacts of standards, the access of all stakeholders to scientific results, the need for multidimensional and multilevel comparative analysis, and the need for research on values, animal welfare, sustainable agriculture, ecosystem impacts of agriculture and economics as they relate to standards.
18. *Research Projects.* Research should be undertaken to assist people and groups working to promote equitable standards setting, to wit:

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- 18.1 A study of the interface between private and public standards setting, particularly because private standards may be outpacing public standards.
- 18.2 A study of the interface between concerns raised by groups in industrialized and developing nations. Though many object to the way standards are now set by the WTO/Codex, they may have different ideas on the way standards should be set.
- 18.3 A study of the social and economic costs of complying with emerging private and public standards, particularly the cost to poor countries of meeting new food safety standards. (Is it going to be easy and without cost, or difficult and prohibitively expensive?)
- 18.4 A study of the relation between general public health (especially in developing nations) and the safety of production processes located there. (How do cholera outbreaks in Kenya affect food and fishery production there?) Is there a relation between the safety of public health and the safety of food?
- 18.5 A study of the role of scientists in standards setting and risk assessment. Is their role impartial and objective, or partisan and biased? How are agendas identified?
- 18.6 A study/inventory of regional, national and international standards bodies.
19. *Knowledge About Outcomes.* Many of the claims about differential impacts of standards lack supporting evidence.
- 19.1 Research needs to begin assessing the gains and losses related to changes in the international trading system, and especially changes in standards policies.
- 19.2 Impact assessment should become an integral part of evaluating existing standards and changes/additions to standards policy. This needs to be done on a national, cross-national, regional and class basis.

Appendix: Proposed Modifications to the SPS Agreement

1. *Environmental Concerns.* An article similar to Article 104 of the North American Free Trade Agreement needs to be introduced.⁴ Animal health and welfare and ethical issues might be acceptable, providing no distinction is made between locally produced and imported animals and animal products. Article XX (a) of the GATT (moral code) could be referred to in the relevant paragraphs of the SPS agreement.
2. *Product standards should be clearly distinguished from process standards under the SPS.*
3. *Standards for products and process grading should be distinguished from the issue of institutional standards as regulatory controls.*
4. *Precautionary Principle and the Burden of Proof*
 - 4.1 It is reasonable that the party who sets a higher standard than the international standard(s) assumes the burden of proof that its standard is scientifically based.
 - 4.2 Article 5.7 of the SPS agreement⁵ attempts to address the issue of whether scientific evidence is adequate to deal with risks.
 - 4.21 Once an importing country establishes a temporary measure consistent with the first sentence of the article, an exporter has to assume the burden of proof that the measure introduced by the importer is not scientifically based.
5. *Dispute Settlement Process*
 - 5.1 The dispute settlement process should be rule based, not power based.
 - 5.2 A moratorium on SPS disputes should be declared until after the next round of WTO negotiations.
 - 5.3 Consultations and Dispute Settlement
 - 5.31 Article 11, Part 2 should be changed as follows: “To this end, the panel ~~may~~ (SHALL), ~~when it deems it appropriate~~, establish an advisory technical experts group, or consult the relevant international organization, at the request of either party to the dispute or on its own initiative.”
 - 5.32 The WTO budget should include funds necessary to support scientific assessments by international organizations.
 - 5.33 The WHO should have a list of validated experts (expert witnesses).
 - 5.34 Clear mechanisms should be required for validating expert witnesses.
 - 5.4 Expert Opinion
 - 5.41 The WHO should furnish a list of indicative experts to provide advice.
 - 5.42 Scientific evidence should be provided by independent experts
 - 5.43 Fee shifting should take place. The loser should be liable for costs and attorney fees. Scientific evidence should be provided by independent experts.

⁴Article 104, Section 1 of the NAFTA reads in part as follows: **Relation to Environmental and Conservation Agreements.** In the event of any inconsistency between this Agreement and the specific trade obligation set out in: (a) the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, ...*, (b) The *Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, ...*, (c) the *Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, ...* [etc.], such obligations shall prevail to the extent of the inconsistency, provided that where a Party has a choice among equally effective and reasonably available means of complying with such obligations, the Party chooses the alternative that is the least inconsistent with the other provisions of this Agreement.

⁵Article 5.7 states: “In cases where relevant scientific evidence is insufficient, a Member may provisionally adopt sanitary or phytosanitary measures on the basis of available pertinent information, including that from the relevant international organizations as well as from sanitary or phytosanitary measures applied by other Members. In such circumstances, Members shall seek to obtain the additional information necessary for a more objective assessment of risk and review the sanitary or phytosanitary measure accordingly within a reasonable period of time.”

Table 1. Selected International Food and Agricultural Standards Bodies

Organization:	The Function of the Organization:
<p>Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex)</p>	<p>Established in 1961, the Codex Alimentarius Commission, in consultation with the directors-general of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), is responsible for making proposals on all matters pertaining to the implementation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, the purposes of which are: protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade; promoting coordination of all food standards work undertaken by international governmental and non-governmental organizations; determining priorities and initiating and guiding the preparation of draft standards through and with the aid of appropriate organizations; finalizing those standards and, after acceptance by governments, publishing them in a Codex Alimentarius, either as regional or worldwide standards, together with international standards already finalized by other bodies whenever this is practicable; and amending published standards, after appropriate survey in the light of developments.</p> <p>http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/FAOINFO/ECONOMIC/ESN/codex/default.htm</p>
<p>International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)</p>	<p>The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) is a multilateral treaty deposited with the director-general of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and administered through the IPPC Secretariat located in the FAO's Plant Protection Service. Contracting parties to the IPPC number 110 governments. The purpose of the IPPC is to prevent the spread and introduction of pests of plants and plant products and to promote measures for their control. The convention provides a framework and forum for international cooperation, harmonization and technical exchange in collaboration with regional and national plant protection organizations (RPPOs and NPPOs). The IPPC plays a vital role in trade — it is the organization recognized by the World Trade Organization in the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the SPS agreement) as the source for international standards for the phytosanitary measures (ISPMs) affecting trade.</p> <p>http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/FaoInfo/Agricult/AGP/AGPP/PQ/</p>
<p>International Organization for Standardization (ISO)</p>	<p>The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies from some 130 countries. ISO is a non-governmental organization established in 1947. The mission of the ISO is to promote the development of standardization and related activities in the world so as to facilitate the international exchange of goods and services, and to develop cooperation in the spheres of intellectual, scientific, technological and economic activity. The ISO's work results in international agreements that are published as international standards.</p> <p>http://www.iso.ch/</p>
<p>Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD)</p>	<p>The OECD provides its 29 member countries a setting in which to discuss, develop and perfect economic and social policy. Governments compare experiences, seek answers to common problems and work to coordinate domestic and international policies. OECD countries produce two-thirds of the world's goods and services, but it is not an exclusive club — membership is limited only by a country's commitment to a market economy and a pluralistic democracy. The core of original members has expanded from Europe and North America to include Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Finland, Mexico, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Korea. Many contacts with the rest of the world occur through programs with countries in the former Soviet bloc, Asia and Latin America — contacts which, in some cases, may lead to membership.</p> <p>http://www.oecd.org/</p>
<p>Office International des Epizooties (OIE) (World Organisation for Animal Health)</p>	<p>The main objectives of the OIE are to: inform governments of the occurrence and course of animal diseases throughout the world and of ways to control these diseases; coordinate, at the international level, studies devoted to the surveillance and control of animal diseases; and harmonize regulations for trade in animals and animal products among member countries. The OIE enjoys permanent working relations with more than 20 other international organizations, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).</p> <p>http://www.oie.int/</p>

Organization:	The Function of the Organization:
World Health Organization (WHO)	<p>The objective of the WHO is the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. Health, as defined in the WHO Constitution, is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. In support of its main objective, the organization has a wide range of functions, including: to act as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work; to promote technical cooperation; to assist governments, upon request, in strengthening health services; to furnish appropriate technical assistance and, in emergencies, necessary aid, upon the request or acceptance of governments; to stimulate and advance work on the prevention and control of epidemic, endemic and other diseases; to promote, in cooperation with other specialized agencies, where necessary, the improvement of nutrition, housing, sanitation, recreation, economic or working conditions and other aspects of environmental hygiene; to promote and coordinate biomedical and health services research; to promote improved standards of teaching and training in the health, medical and related professions; to establish and stimulate the establishment of international standards for biological, pharmaceutical and similar products, and to standardize diagnostic procedures; to foster activities in the field of mental health, especially those activities affecting the harmony of human relations. The WHO also proposes conventions, agreements and regulations, and makes recommendations about international nomenclature of diseases, causes of death and public health practices. It develops, establishes and promotes international standards concerning foods and biological, pharmaceutical and similar substances.</p> <p>http://www.who.int/</p>
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)	<p>The Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is the forum at which the countries of North America, western, central and eastern Europe, and central Asia come together to forge the tools of their economic cooperation. This large group of countries accounts for 64 percent of world production, 60 percent of total exports, and between 65 and 70 percent of the patents registered throughout the world each year. It is also responsible for 60 percent of the world's carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. The ECE is a forum for dialogue aimed at bringing about better understanding and agreement on common guidelines and policies, and a place where agreements are negotiated and assistance activities prepared. Its main purpose is to harmonize the policies and practices of its member countries. Such harmonization not only facilitates economic exchange investment and the integration of transport networks but also makes environmental procedures more effective.</p> <p>http://www.unece.org/</p>
World Trade Organization (WTO)	<p>The WTO is the only international body dealing with the rules of trade between nations. At its heart are the WTO agreements, the legal ground rules for international commerce and for trade policy. The agreements have three main objectives: to help trade flow as freely as possible, to achieve further liberalization gradually through negotiation and to set up an impartial means of settling disputes.</p> <p>http://www.wto.org/</p>

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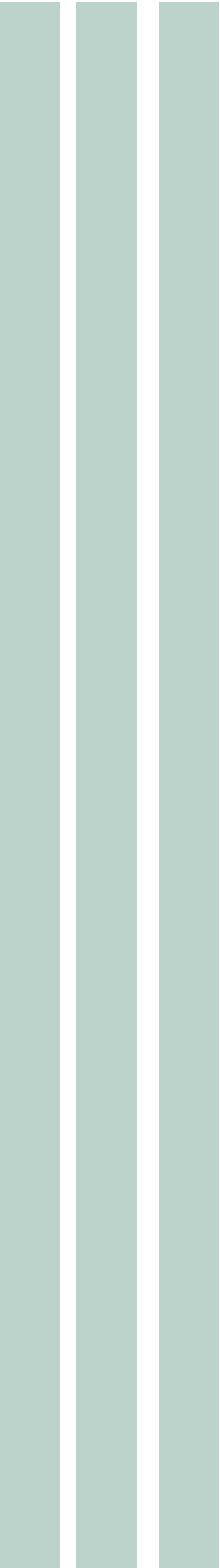
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