



PRESS RELEASE

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Press Contact

Dale Wiehoff
Communications Director
(612) 870-3401
dale@iatp.org

About IATP

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. IATP is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota with an office in Washington D.C.

New report challenges food safety and animal health standards in TPP trade agreement

MINNEAPOLIS/WASHINGTON D.C.– The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy has released an analysis of Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement chapter on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, which deals with the regulatory standards intended to protect food safety and animal health. The TPP SPS chapter is legally bound to the World Trade Organization SPS Agreement, which refers to thousands of international food and animal and plant health standards. The IATP analysis places the SPS chapter in the context of how U.S. agencies regulate and deregulate food and agricultural products.

Contrary to claims by the Obama administration that the TPP would be a “high standards” agreement that would serve as a model for future trade agreements, IATP’s research reveals that the safeguards intended to protect the food supply have in effect been lowered and oversight given over to the very industries that the standards are meant to regulate. The TPP would exacerbate the capture of the regulatory agencies by the regulated companies.

The SPS chapter was produced in confidential USTR-industry dialogues and in secret intergovernmental negotiations. The text reveals very little about how governments will provide the “appropriate level of sanitary or phytosanitary protection.” Congress, as part of the Fast Track process, has only 90 calendar days to review the 6,194 page TPP text before President Obama signs the agreement and presents it for an up or down vote, with no amendments allowed.

The key findings of the IATP report on the SPS chapter in the TPP agreement are:

- “Trade in products of modern biotechnology” has been located in Chapter 2, “National Treatment and Access for Market Goods,” so that controversies over GMOs or synthetic biology would be judged based on criteria of market access rather than risk assessments of their safety for human health or the environment.
- Provisions establishing an SPS consultative committee led by trade officials will further weaken and possibly conflict with global standards setting bodies on food and plant safety.

- Weakness in the U.S. regulatory agencies to provide the “appropriate level of sanitary and phytosanitary protection” required in the Chapter will be exacerbated by the confidentiality requirements that already hobble U.S. scientific peer review of food and agricultural products.

According to Dr. Steve Suppan, author of the report, “The SPS chapter is inadequate to regulate trade in food and agriculture products derived from 21st century food and agricultural technologies, such as plant synthetic biology and agri-nanotechnology. At a time when more peer-reviewed science is required to ensure the safety of products derived from these new technologies, the chapter puts the “primary representative” in the trade ministries as the ultimate authority over determining which food safety and animal and plant health rules will provide the appropriate level of protection for consumers and agricultural plants and animals.” These and other issues detailed in the IATP analysis clearly indicate that the TPP requires a fuller public debate in the next few weeks, before President Obama can sign what he hopes will be a “legacy making” trade deal that is largely about removing regulatory “irritants” to expanding both imports and exports.

Read the complete report at iatp.org.