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IPC urges transatlantic regulatory cooperation on food standards vis-à-vis developing countries

The EU and U.S. want to improve the safety of food imports and have programs in place to increase trade opportunities for developing countries. IPC's latest position paper argues that these goals are mutually supportive and calls for U.S.-EU collaboration on technical assistance and regulatory streamlining of their respective import requirements in the agri-food sector. "Trade preferences are very important for developing countries," stresses IPC Chairman Piet Bukman, "but we must do a better job of helping countries take advantage of these by also paying attention to food standards."

The paper "Reconciling Food Safety with Import Facilitation Objectives: Helping Developing Country Producers Meet U.S. and EU Food Requirements through Transatlantic Cooperation" examines the similarities and differences of U.S. and EU requirements for horticultural and fishery products. "Whereas the overarching standards in these sectors are not substantially different, as is the case in the meat sector or with regard to genetically modified foods, U.S. and EU mechanisms for demonstrating compliance with these requirements importantly do differ," IPC Chief Executive Charlotte Hebebrand points out. IPC's recommendations are for the EU and U.S. to:

- Pursue joint education, outreach and technical assistance in those areas where EU and U.S. requirements do not fundamentally differ from each other;
- Establish a more systematic information exchange given the limitations of ensuring food safety through border inspection or duplicative in-country inspections;
- Identify and agree on "Regulatory Critical Control Points," that need the most attention and eliminate unimportant features of their separate systems that add burden without commensurate benefit.
- Base their measures on internationally agreed standards.

"We know that transatlantic regulatory cooperation is important for EU and U.S. industries because they wish to limit the costs caused by divergent standards," comments IPC Member Pedro de Camargo Neto; "such costs are even greater for developing country producers interested in accessing both of these important markets."

This position paper, authored by Linda Horton and Elisabethann Wright, is available at <http://www.agritrade.org/documents/IPCStandardsPositionPaper.pdf>. Findings and recommendations will be disseminated in a seminar in Geneva on June 26, with comments from U.S., EU and African regulators and producers <http://www.agritrade.org/SPSInformationSession.html>.

About IPC The International Food & Agricultural Trade Policy Council (IPC) promotes a more open and equitable global food system by pursuing pragmatic trade and development policies in food and agriculture to meet the world's growing needs. IPC convenes influential policymakers, agribusiness executives, farm leaders, and academics from developed and developing countries to clarify complex issues, build consensus, and advocate policies to decision-makers. More information on the organization and its membership can be found on our website: www.agritrade.org.