

TTIP: A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

EU-US TRADE DEAL BLOCKS FUTURE OF GOOD FOOD AND FARMING



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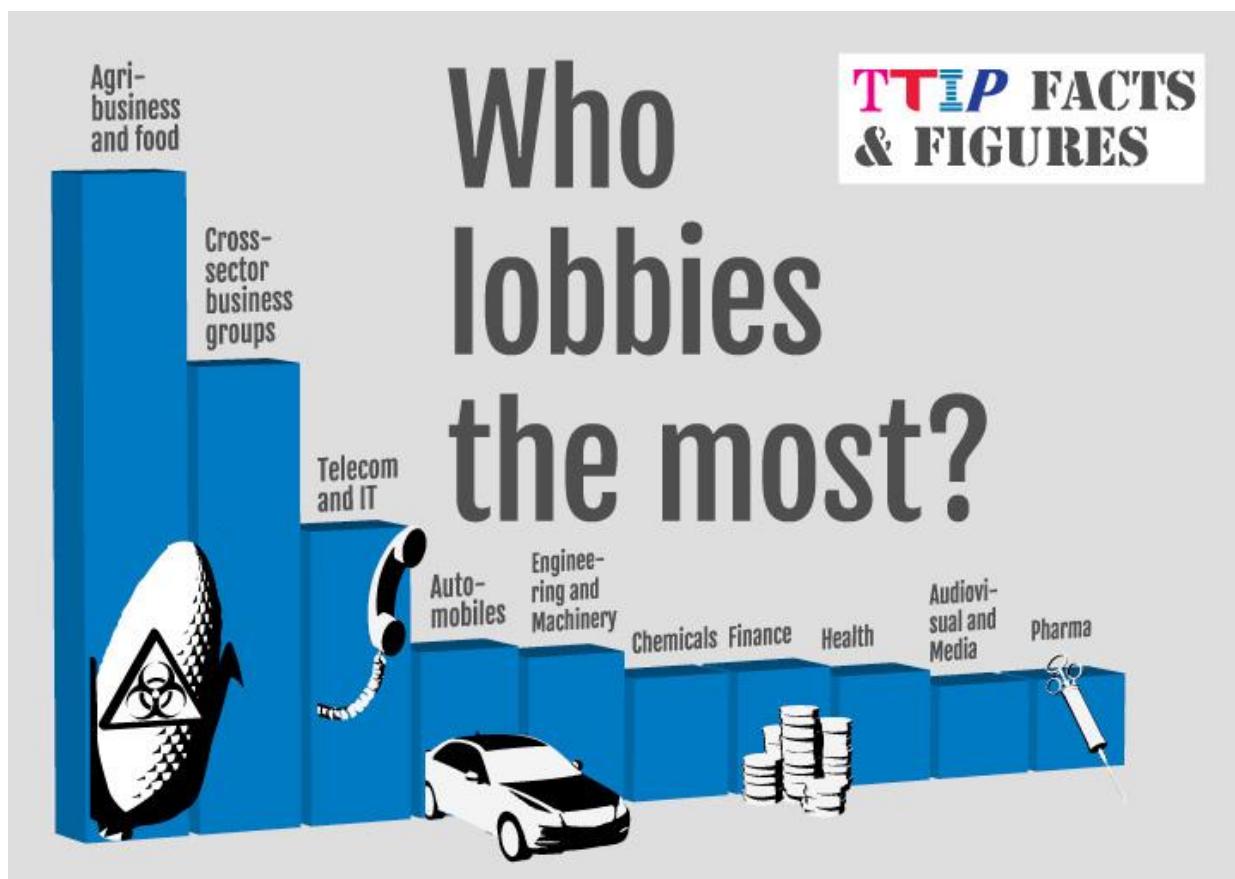
TTIP: A threat to food and farming

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is a proposed free trade agreement between the European Union (EU) and the United States (US). Proponents argue that it will increase trade leading to economic growth and jobs. But opponents have voiced many concerns, including its impact on food and farming on both sides of the Atlantic and its potential to undermine a more sustainable food system. This is because **TTIP will promote an industrial model of food and farming, threatening the survival of small family farms, local food initiatives, standards for healthy and safe food, animal welfare, the environment, and public health.**

TTIP: A corporate dream scenario

Industry lobbying in favour of TTIP has been fierce across the board, but agribusiness corporations have been in the lead, as they consider the treaty a perfect tool to redirect public money and counteract existing and future regulations aimed at protecting workers, public health, animal welfare, and the environment.

Agribusiness corporations, including multinational food and drink companies, agrochemical, animal feed industries, and 'big' farming interests, all stand to gain from this and have massively lobbied the European Commission on TTIP.



Agribusiness and associated corporations have been in the lead of industry lobbying on TTIP

Free trade vs healthy food

Transnational corporations – including food and beverage companies and supermarket chains – have been some of the driving forces behind free trade agreements. This free trade food model is gradually altering diets from traditional and unprocessed foods to high-fat, high-sugar diets closely linked with diseases such as obesity, cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.

Eroding standards: Harmonisation and mutual recognition

While the European Commission has strongly denied that TTIP will jeopardise EU food safety standards, they have presented little to back up their claims. In fact, TTIP is designed to flatten out differences in current rules between the EU and the US that are seen as 'trade-distorting'. This could lead to a race to the bottom for standards.

While far from perfect, the EU has a 'farm to fork' policy where each part of the food chain is monitored. It also – at least in some areas – applies the precautionary principle, which allows withdrawal from the market of products likely to be hazardous. In contrast, the US system focuses on the end product, which can only be regulated or banned when there is a scientific consensus on its danger or toxicity. Corporate lobby groups are now attacking the precautionary principle by saying it's not based on 'sound' science; in reality what they are asking for is 'industry-friendly' science.

Flattening out differences in rules via 'mutual recognition' or 'harmonisation' of each others' standards will mean the cheaper, corporate-friendly rules will prevail – a 'race to the bottom'.

While mutual recognition means easier market access for exporters, the less stringent rules could have serious impacts on human health and the environment, for example from a rise in antimicrobial resistance through routine antibiotic use in industrial animal agriculture, or the use of pesticides implicated in bee colony collapse.



Photo: Shutterstock

The less stringent rules of mutual recognition could result in rise in the use of pesticides implicated in bee colony collapse

TTIP – Impact on farmers' livelihoods

TTIP will mean that small and medium size family farms will face increased competition. In this scenario, the intensive agricultural model, which is more developed in the US, will expand quickly in the EU and have a devastating effect on rural communities. Transnational corporations would have even more control over the food system, with a subsequent decrease in citizens' own control over their food, land, water and seeds.

The EU's higher animal welfare, health, social and environmental standards, but also the cost of land, all mean that production costs in the EU are far higher than in North America. In particular, European farmers' unions warn that the 'mutual recognition of standards' will mean that producers with higher standards - and therefore higher costs - will eventually lose this race to the bottom. TTIP in addition aims to remove all remaining tariffs between the US and EU. Small meat and dairy producers could be strongly hit. It is a choice between trying to survive in the face of enormous distortion of competition, or sink to the lowest standards.

Farmers' right to use, exchange or sell their seeds will be further threatened by the agreement with the application of even stronger intellectual property rights on seeds, as is the case in the United States. TTIP rules on intellectual property will also affect quality labels and geographical indications. The US uses a patent or trademark system, and opposes the European system of Geographical Indications used to indicate quality and geographic origin.



Photo:CIWF/Kelemen Beata

Higher welfare, left, and feedlot, below. European farmers' unions warn that the 'mutual recognition of standards' will mean that producers with higher standards - and therefore higher costs - will eventually lose the race to the bottom.



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Locking in the future: Regulatory cooperation and Investor State Dispute Mechanism (ISDS)

Regulatory cooperation is the ultimate goal for TTIP; the aim is to create a mechanism for the EU and the US to work jointly on reviewing existing rules or standards (such as labour or food safety standards) that are seen as barriers to trade by industry, and prevent new ones in the future. This would considerably increase corporate influence over the political decisions that will shape the agriculture of the future, closing the door on the possibility of moving the EU and the US towards genuinely sustainable food policies. The goal is the creation of a permanent EU-US dialogue in which industry will have a direct voice.

TTIP's chapter on the very controversial Investor State Dispute Mechanism will give companies the right to sue governments over regulations that undermine their expected profit, which is a **huge threat to democratic decision making**.

A precautionary tale: Legislation on pesticides

A wide range of pesticides are harmful to human health and ecosystems. Endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs), for example, pose a serious threat by changing the way hormones function in humans and animals. These chemicals are directly linked to a wide range of problems in reproductive health, hormone related cancers, and even obesity and diabetes.

The EU has been working for years to agree on a proposal for dealing with these chemicals. Pesticide industries in both the EU and US, however, are pushing hard to minimise legislation on endocrine disruptors, arguing that the categorisation of chemicals as endocrine disruptors runs "counter to the science based risk assessment approach used in the USA".



TTIP could undermine progress on regulating pesticides by harmonising standards down to the lowest level.

Photo: Shutterstock

In a similar fashion, these same proponents have cited the proposed EU ban on neonicotinoids – the pesticide strongly linked to bee colony collapse – as an abuse of the precautionary principle.

Progress made on regulating endocrine disruptors in Europe could be undermined by the push in the TTIP to **'harmonise' standards down to the lowest level**. And this could lead to a 'regulatory freeze' that would block progress on regulating pesticides containing endocrine disruptors and neonicotinoids.

Animal welfare in the TTIP: Promoting factory farming

The EU has recognised animals as sentient beings and requires Member States to respect the welfare of animals. A number of legislative measures have been passed that guarantee minimum standards for the protection of animals on-farm, during transport, and at slaughter. Among them, EU-wide bans protect against the worst forms of cruelty, such as barren battery cages for hens, veal crates, and sow stalls (after the first four weeks of a sow's pregnancy). In the US, regulations on farm animal welfare are generally substantially lower.

The deregulatory approach pushed by TTIP through 'mutual recognition', 'harmonisation' and 'regulatory cooperation' is likely to compromise the welfare of animals and will accelerate the process of intensification of animal agriculture on both sides of the Atlantic by **lowering existing standards and freezing and even eliminating the possibility for future legislation protecting animals.**



Photo: Compassion in World Farming

The deregulatory approach pushed by TTIP is likely to accelerate the process of intensification of animal agriculture on both sides of the Atlantic

Antibiotic resistance

Antibiotic resistance is a huge challenge in both the EU and US. Heavy use of antibiotics in intensive animal agriculture has been linked to the development of antimicrobial resistance in humans, leading to the rise of non-treatable superbugs. The non-therapeutic use of antibiotics and hormones for growth promotion is not permitted in the EU, although the rules are often circumvented to use medicines prophylactically. In the US, non-therapeutic use of antibiotics and hormones for growth promotion is not prohibited. **Harmonisation of rules on antibiotic use under TTIP can be expected to weaken standards, undermining all the progress made in the EU in limiting the use of antibiotics and growth promoters.**

Inspection of the food chain

Inspections of all aspects of the food chain are crucial to monitor compliance with legislation and standards, including those to protect farm animal welfare. It is unclear however which inspection regime will be put in place under TTIP, whether the inspection bodies will have the capacity needed to carry out inspections and **what action will be taken in the case of infringements.**

TTIP already at work

Cloning of animals for food is permitted in the US and there is increasing pressure on the EU to open its market to such imports. The European Commission is already watering down proposed rules in anticipation of a TTIP deal. Its proposals on animal cloning provide a clear example; a proposed ban of cloning of animals and the sale of products from clones does not extend to their descendants. This risks opening the market for these products from the US, which will inevitably lead to **an increase in the use of descendants of clones in the food chain in the EU**, in order to remain competitive.

A threat to GMO rules in the EU and US

In the US there are outdated rules combined with a largely voluntary approach on how to safety check for genetically modified (GM) products. Biotech industries and their lobbyists in both the EU and US want TTIP to 'synchronize' the more rigorous EU GMO approval process with the US automatic approval process, which would mean a lowering of the EU standards.

At the same time, US negotiators and industry lobbyists have been pushing for weaker EU rules on GM imports. They want the EU to allow imports of food and seeds that are contaminated with GM food or seeds, even in cases where the GM material has not been authorised as safe in the EU.

This would mean farmers and citizens would not know if the food or seeds they were buying contained GMOs – and Europeans could be eating unauthorised GM ingredients which had not been through any form of safety check.

Industry groups are also pushing back on Europe's mandatory labelling requirement of GMOs. While they are targeting EU labelling programs, **the trade rules** they push for **could also outlaw new GMO labelling laws at state level in the US.**



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Food Labelling

Labelling schemes are different between the two regions. The US focus is on nutrient content. The EU has used a number of criteria for different products. An example is the mandatory egg labelling scheme which tells consumers which production systems their eggs come from. Under TTIP it is not clear which rules will be accepted and whether any labelling schemes will be mandatory or voluntary. EU consumers may find they are **unable to choose cage free** when purchasing products containing imported eggs.

What's at stake for farming and food?

TTIP will lower regulations on food safety, animal welfare, public health and environmental protection, and will lead to more industrialised, intensive food production that undermines the health of people and the planet. **Trade policy should be for the benefit of people and the environment, not corporations.**

STOP TTIP BEFORE IT STOPS GOOD FOOD AND FARMING

Sign the self-organised European Citizens' Initiative at <https://stop-ttip.org/>

Read more:

- * International website with a good overview of information and actions: <http://www.bilaterals.org/?-TTIP->
- * Alternative Trade Mandate. Seattle to Brussels Network: www.alternativetrademandate.org
- * Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy (IATP). *10 reasons why TTIP is bad for good food and farming.* <http://tinyurl.com/IATPdoc>
- * IATP & Heinrich Böll Foundation. *Promises and Perils of the TTIP: Negotiating a Transatlantic Agricultural Market.* <http://tinyurl.com/IATP-HBoell>
- * Center for Food Safety. *Trade Matters: TTIP - Impacts on Food and Farming.* <http://tinyurl.com/CenterforFoodSafety>
- * Corporate Observatory Europe (CEO). *TTIP: A lose-lose deal for food and farming.* <http://tinyurl.com/CEObservatory>
- * GRAIN. *Food safety in the EU-US trade agreement: going outside the box.* <http://tinyurl.com/GrainDoc>
- * Friends of the Earth Europe & IATP. *EU-US trade deal: A bumper crop for 'big food'?* <http://tinyurl.com/FoE-IATP>
- * IATP. *Maine Agriculture and Food Systems in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.* <http://tinyurl.com/IATP-Maine>

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