



The Debate in the Public Sector on Private Standards

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Why private standards are an issue in the public sector?

- Consumer demands now extend well beyond safety....sustainability, ethical etc
- Retailers are under regulatory, competitive and reputational pressures.
- Complaints have increased that private standards are now barriers to trade.
- Developing countries are raising problems in the WTO, Codex, OIE.
- New issues are emerging, like Climate Change, Sustainability.



What is happening in EU?

- EC foresees guidelines on private standards.
- Concerns at competitive distortions, aided by private standards.
- EU producers complain that imports are produced to lower standards.
- Competitiveness and regulatory burden – Stoiber Group.



The international level

- Heated discussions in the WTO, in Codex and the OIE.
- Issue in WTO is if private standards are covered by SPS Agreement.
- Very much a “North-South” divide.
- Discussions not helped by confusion over food safety with other issues.



So what, why should you care?

- Issue is creating real tensions in international trade, especially in WTO.
- Developing countries are unhappy and are demanding action.
- Risks that complaints will create pressures leading to a wrong response.
- There are legitimate concerns which should not be ignored by retailers.



EC position

- Our position in WTO is transparent – we do not accept the criticisms.
- Failure to bring forward real examples of abuses.
- However, more could be done to improve transparency, consultation
- Safety should be referenced to international standards.



GLOBALGAP?

- Carrying out a very important and legitimate role.
- High profile at international level.
- Commendable efforts at greater transparency, stakeholder consultation, costs etc.
- Key, with GFSI, to overall progress.



Suggestions

- Work with the Official Authorities
- Respect official standards and avoid competition on food safety
- Be very sensitive to the needs of Developing Countries
 - - Try to accommodate smallholders
 - - Highlight "success stories"
 - - Be transparent
 - - Respect official MRLs
- Aim for commonly accepted certification



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Three key messages

- Harmonise standards
- Reference them to official, especially international standards
- Engage with international standard setting organisations