

Euro Coop Position Paper on CETA

The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, an ambitious endeavour that should not lower European standards

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Introduction

The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) is a free trade agreement between the European Union and Canada. CETA is aimed at removing 99% of tariffs that the EU and Canada charge each other while trading. Tariffs are translated into extra costs when buying goods that are subsequently passed on to consumers.

Proponents of this agreement argue that removing tariffs saves millions in taxes every year, that CETA creates mutual recognition in regulated professions such as engineers and accountants, and that ultimately it benefits consumers and SMEs. Conversely, **opponents** of this agreement argue that it weakens European consumers' rights, it brings profits mainly to big corporations, and that it may undermine the EU's environmental standards.

What are the **next steps** for CETA? CETA is a **mixed agreement**, meaning that both the European Parliament and national Parliaments have to approve it. In the EU, the European Parliament ratified the CETA agreement in February 2017, while most national Parliaments still have to ratify the agreement. As it stands now, not all national parliaments in the EU would be in the position of signing CETA, meaning that CETA may still never be fully ratified. However, the provisional entry into force¹ of CETA is on the 21st of September 2017, which means that from that date almost 90% of provisions within CETA would be implemented.

Euro Coop has a few concerns regarding what CETA means for Europe's consumers. Indeed, from food safety to consumer information, standards vary between the EU and Canada, and harmonising certain rules could pose a threat to the European way of living, eating, and addressing risk. This short position paper will first explore some general comments that Euro Coop would like to put forward with regards to CETA, and then look into more food-related concerns.

¹ "Provisional entry into force" means that CETA can enter into force as soon as the Council and the European Parliament have signed off the deal; prior to the approval by national EU Parliaments. Only those parts where the EU has exclusive competence will be provisionally applied.

General comments

Precautionary principle

EU legislation foresees the potential use of the precautionary principle, particularly when it comes to **chemical and food safety**. The precautionary principle forms the cornerstone of food safety decisions in Europe, while this is not the case in Canada. CETA does not mention the precautionary principle, but rather makes reference to a **more science-based approach** when it comes to evaluating risk in which a risk must be unequivocally proven prior to banning a product. Euro Coop does not agree with this approach and wishes that CETA will not prevent EU policymakers from using the precautionary principle.

Effects on policy making

Euro Coop believes that the EU and its Member States should be able to **pursue public policy objectives**, including consumer rights and health protection measures, **without interference from outside the EU**. Euro Coop shares the concerns that have been raised regarding the fact that government's public policy decisions could be challenged by multinational companies via the **investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS)** included in CETA. The EU and its Member States should be able to regulate and take decisions in the field of public policy without being taken to court by multinationals that operate outside of their territory.

Competition

Euro Coop is concerned that weaker actors in the food chain may be worse off given the potentially cheap imports from Canada. This is especially a concern for cheap meat imports. The position of EU actors in the food chain should not become weaker as a consequence of CETA.

Food policy related comments

Consumer information

Consumer co-operatives are committed to **providing accurate and comprehensive consumer information**. Through adequate food labelling European consumers are enabled to make informed choices and adopt responsible consumption practices.

There are differences in the information displayed to consumers on food packages in the EU and Canada. Should CETA be ratified, consumers should still be entitled to only come across food products that display the same **wealth of information** that European consumers are used to. Particularly, the **origin** of food products, especially when it comes to meat, should be displayed on the package.

Trade of meat and meat products

Euro Coop members are big supporters of promoting and sustaining the quality and healthiness of European food products, meat and meat-derived products being no exception. European consumers should only be confronted with **high quality non-cloned meat that was not chlorinated** prior to being put on the market. Also, livestock animals should **not have received hormones or unnecessary antibiotics**.

Indeed, CETA should not contribute to the already **disturbing and dangerous advance of anti-microbial resistance (AMR)**. Euro Coop had previously expressed its opinion on this very important and pressing issue [here](#), highlighting in particular that current measures are not enough to

counteract AMR. Taking into account the use of antibiotics in Canadian meat and given that more of this meat will be imported in the EU, **we cannot risk an increase in AMR.**

Environmental protection

Environmental protection is considered as a cornerstone in the decisions taken by consumer co-operatives. As such, Euro Coop welcomes the positive statement by the European Commission highlighting that CETA contains “*strong rules on the protection (...) of the environment*”. However, Euro Coop shares the concerns of environmentalists who consider that the environmental provisions contained in CETA cannot be enforced through trade sanctions should they be violated. **Environmental provisions contained in the CETA should be respected in order to ensure environmental protection.** As such, binding environmental commitments should be included in CETA.

Geographical indications

Euro Coop welcomes the **recognition of 143 European Geographical Indications (GIs)** in the CETA. Indeed, the European agriculture sector will benefit from the recognition of these GIs the most famous and renowned GIs included in this agreement. This is also a definite milestone for Euro Coop’s members who value the recognition and protection of EU quality agri-food products. However, Euro Coop would like to express a small concern in this respect, which is that there are more than 143 GIs in Europe. As such, Euro Coop would welcome that all EU GIs be recognised under CETA.

Concluding remarks

Euro Coop generally welcomes the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) with Canada, as it represents an opportunity for growth for the EU. However, **certain paramount, inherently European principles should be respected and uphold.**

Generally, **CETA should not undermine the European way of living, eating and addressing risk.** Most importantly, although the precautionary principle is not mentioned in the agreement, CETA should not be a barrier between Europeans and the use of the precautionary principle.

More particularly, **CETA should not lower EU’s standards when it comes to food.** The EU has enjoyed **hormone-free meat** until now, and this should not change with CETA. Same goes for rules on **GMOs and on animal cloning.** CETA should also not put in jeopardy the efforts made in the EU to halt **anti-microbial resistance (AMR).** Importantly, **environmental protection** should remain high on the agenda, which means that the environmental provisions contained in CETA should be respected.

For more information, please contact:

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