

Patricia M. Keilbach

Transatlantic Food Fights in an Era of Globalization: When Menus, Rules and Choices Collide

What explains the current status of disorder, conflict and difficulties in arriving at mutually agreed upon international policy for agriculture? Why are transatlantic tensions mounting over issues related to the trade in food products? The recent disputes between the European Union (EU) and the United States (US) over genetically modified food products (GMs) reveal that international trade conflicts are becoming more complex. While many actors in the US advocate the spread of GMs and argue that given the exponential rate of population growth, our future may be dependent on the success of the promise of GMs delivering plentiful, more nutritious, and safe food, actors in the EU have argued that information about the impact of GMs on human health and the environment is relatively scarce, and the promise to deliver the goods is uncertain. This chapter uses the case of the recent GM trade dispute between the EU and the US to identify problems and potentials for harmonizing standards within the context of an enlarged transatlantic relationship. While a coordinated international food security regime would be optimal, because the diverging regulatory approaches across the Atlantic stem from ideological differences rather than from economic considerations, harmonization of policies will prove difficult.