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GLAWCAL COMMENT #137

HOW TO APPROACH THE ISSUE OF FOOD SECURITY?

Based on

Carolina Palma: "Multilevel Governance in Food Security Regulation: With the Example of Costa Rican Rice"

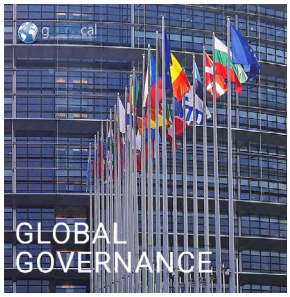
gLAWcal

Global Law Initiatives for Sustainable Development

A gLAWcal comment on Carolina Palma's *"Multilevel Governance in Food Security Regulation: With the Example of Costa Rican Rice"* in Antonio Segura Serrano (Ed.) The Reform of International Economic Governance

Food security is a hot issue of nowadays, both at national and international level. If we consider that even if the food production is yearly sufficient, there are still many cases of malnutrition, the issue is even more complex. According to the statistics, 30% of infant deaths are linked to malnutrition. Additionally, according to the Global Food Security, about 850 million people are undernourished. In a paradoxical way, there is also the other side of the issue: obesity and bad nutritional habits are reaching alarming levels. On the one side, it is worth noticing that being such a complex issue a univocal solution is not easy to find. On the other hand, internal policies are not always coherent and integrative in their approach to food security. Given the seriousness of the topic, policies have been targeted across all the relevant areas (food availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability). A good expectation is the idea that, considering the amount of arable land, the world can still produce enough food in the future, with the ability to grow by 60 percent (meaning an additional 1.1 percent per year) in order to feed the growing population that is expected to increase to 9.3 billion by 2050.

The point is here to find a proper balance between different interests (farmers'interests, traders'interests, consumers'interests etc...). Of great importance is respecting the principle of 'no-harm'. This means that policies should not harm food security, even if they do not contribute to food insecurity as effectively In this regard, the minimum to be expected is that national regulations do not harm food security at any level in a particular multilateral and regional setting. The WTO aims to have a balanced playing field for all member countries, where countries that 'have the means' to subsidize are given stronger limits and countries that do not have the means are given more flexibility. The WTO also recognizes that liberalization is not the only avenue towards food security and that it will not automatically lead to a recovery of the food production in poor countries,71 but that liberalization should be accompanied by other internal policies, especially those concerning income distribution and farmer support without bias. For sure, countries should take seriously the task of drafting a national food security policy without bias for some groups and take into account the layers of governance and each country's current situation.



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