

The Universe of Standards: Legitimate Protection, Sophisticated Protectionism, or Potential Development Opportunity?

Monday, 28 September 2009, 16:15-18:15
Geneva, WTO, Room E

The WTO sets out general rules for product standards in the Agreements on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures. However, the universe of standards is much broader and much more complex. It can be subdivided into *obligatory* (often product-related) and *voluntary* (particularly process-related), as well as *public* and *private* standards. Whether they are considered an obstacle to or leverage for international trade depends on the particular perspectives of the private sector, civil society, or governments; producers or consumers; exporters or importers; and developed or developing countries.

The session aims

- to broaden awareness of and increase transparency on the universe of standards and their growing importance for international trade;
- to depoliticize the debate on standards and allow for a more objective view on the issue, juxtaposing potential costs and benefits that arise from the implementation of standards; and
- to present good practices on how the application of standards works on the ground and on how they can be transformed into potential export and development opportunities for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in developing countries.

The session seeks to explore the positive potential, which standards might have as leverage for exports and development perspectives for developing countries, based on what empirical evidence suggests.

Moderator: *Steffen Grammling*, Program Officer (Trade and Development), Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Geneva Office

Speakers:

- *Johan Swinnen*, Professor and Director, LICOS, Centre for Institutions and Economic Performance, Catholic University Leuven
- *Joseph Wozniak*, Programme Manager, Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD), Market Analysis and Research, International Trade Centre (ITC)
- *Sasha Courville*, Executive Director, ISEAL Alliance
- *Adriana Mejia Cuartas*, Director, International Cooperation (Europe), National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia