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International food safety standards, value chain profile and performance of export supply chains of developing countries

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Abstract

During the last decade consumer perception and media attention on food safety have been increasing worldwide following major food crises (Li et al., 2017). Although the real global burden of food-borne disease is largely unknown.

To meet high consumer expectation and reestablish consumer trust in products supplied by markets, prevention has become one of the primary food safety tools for many countries. In addition; this issue has significantly moved up the political agenda creating more effective but costly food safety controls along the food supply chain.

Thus despite public standards, private operators in developed countries (producers, processing companies, retailers...) seek to meet consumer requirements in terms of food safety through the emergence of a plethora of private safety standards, introduced by downstream operators of supply chain vis-à-vis all their suppliers.

The food exporters of developing countries perceive food safety and agricultural safety standards as a trade barrier (Jaffee, Henson, 2004). It is mainly due to the lack of technical and administrative capacities in their countries. They claim that these standards are applied in a discriminatory and protectionist manner. The role of standards and regulations in trade barriers is often explained by the prohibitive increase in production and marketing costs.

Despite the very rich scientific literature on standards, few theoretical works have been devoted to the role played by importers of various international food chains in the access of developing countries products to international markets. Differences in macroeconomic performance among developing countries in their access to international markets may depend on the microeconomic aspects of the typology of international value chains by which these countries enter into international competition.

We try to fill this gap proposing a theoretical model of industrial economics that provides a number of explanations for different strategies based on the characteristics of international markets (differences between safety regulations, market prices) and the types of importers involved (risk aptitude for product rejection at the borders and the structure of their markets).

We think this paper provides a contribution to literature because we discuss the role played by importers of various international food chains in emergence of private standards and access of developing countries in international markets. We show that importers' strategies can directly or indirectly affect the level of developing producer' participation (or exclusion) in export sectors. We verify how the importers adopt a strategy depending on market opportunities and the type of vertical relationships (upstream and downstream) along the international supply chains.

Keywords: food safety, heterogeneity importers strategies, international trade, developing country producers

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