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Food safety

What is it about?

Trade in food and agricultural products between Switzerland and the EU is worth more than CHF 16 billion every year. The EU is Switzerland's main trading partner, and agricultural produce provides a clear illustration of this: 50% of exports in the sector go to the EU, while 72% of imports originate from the EU (as at 2022).

Unfortunately, food counterfeiting and fraud are a persistent issue, with products finding their way onto the market that are unsafe and threaten public health. To mitigate these risks, Switzerland and the EU want to cooperate more closely on food safety.

The aim is to create a comprehensive common food safety area that encompasses the entire food supply chain. The term 'food supply chain' covers all aspects of food law from field to plate. The Food Safety Agreement would cover the major part of trade with agriculture goods with the EU.

By offering Swiss food producers better single market access and improving cooperation on novel foods, the agreement strengthens Switzerland as a business location.

Outcome of exploratory talks and outlook for negotiations

The solution discussed in the exploratory talks envisages the signing of a new single market agreement on food safety. The existing agreement on agriculture is to be expanded to cover the entire food supply chain. The institutional elements will also be incorporated into the agreement.

Switzerland will obtain access to the relevant EU committees and working groups, as well as EU alert systems (including fraud protection and the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF)) and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Swiss producers will also gain better access to the EU single market (and EU producers to the Swiss market in return), while cooperation on the authorisation of novel foods will be reinforced.

Existing exemptions will be retained (including the ban on genetically modified seeds and the ban on transporting animals for slaughter by road). New exemptions for the safeguarding of Swiss standards will be incorporated into the agreement, notably with regard to animal protection and new food production technologies.

Agricultural policy is not affected by the agreement, meaning both parties remain free to shape their own policies. The same applies to the existing border protection for agricultural products (i.e. customs duties and tariff quotas), which Switzerland can maintain.