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GENERAL ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE CCB:**Japan – European Union Free Trade Agreement in Final Phase**

- Japan and the European Union (EU) are close to reaching a broad agreement on a free trade pact, according to the Japan Times. The two sides have held 17 rounds of negotiations since launching talks in March 2013 on an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), and earlier this year the European Commission issued a [press release](#) reaffirming their commitment to conclude the EU-Japan FTA negotiations as soon as possible.
- In the negotiations, Japan has been reluctant to open its agricultural market. However, the EU is urging Japan to make concessions on agricultural products in exchange for eliminating tariffs on around 80 percent of auto part exports from Japan.
- Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Donald Tusk – president of the European Council, and Jean-Claude Juncker – president of the European Commission, are planning to meet on July 6 in Brussels to strike a broad agreement on the trade deal.

India Publishes Amendments to Import Regulations

- The Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is calling for comments on [amendments](#) to the “[Food Safety and Standards \(Import\) Regulations, 2017](#)” which were published in the India Gazette on March 20, 2017.
- Changes include requiring food importers to register with the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, requiring a valid import-export code, and allowing imported foods to clear customs only if they have a valid shelf life of “not less than sixty percent, or three months, whichever is less at the time of import.”
- Additionally, for risk based food import clearance, FSSAI has the authority to evaluate the import risk based on the importer, custom house agents, product, manufacturer, country of origin, port of entry, and compliance history. Further, an importer could be asked to submit a sanitary export certificate from authorized agencies in the exporting categories for certain food categories if specified at that time by the FSSAI.
- The amendments were published on the [FSSAI website](#) on June 20; however, comments are not due until sixty days after the date of notification to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The WTO has not yet been notified.

A REPORT FOR
THE CALIFORNIA
CHERRY BOARD

India Publishes Draft Notification for Organic Foods Regulation

- On June 22, the Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) published a draft notification regarding the “[Draft Food Safety and Standards \(Organic Foods\) Regulation, 2017](#).” The aim of this regulation is to ensure the safety and authenticity of all foods labeled as organic.
- Any food offered or promoted as organic food must comply with all the applicable provisions of the National Program for Organic Production (NPOP), the Participatory Guarantee System for India (PGS-India), or any other system or standards that may be notified by FSSAI.
- The draft regulation mandates that foods labeled as organic must convey full and accurate information on the organic status of the product, and carry either a certification mark or quality assurance mark given by an authorized body mentioned above. All organic food must comply with the Food Safety and Standards (Packaging and Labelling) Regulations, 2011.
- All organic foods imported into India under bilateral or multilateral agreements on the basis of equivalence must be accompanied by a transaction certificate issued by an accredited certification body covered under the terms of an equivalence agreement, and do not need to be re-certified upon import. Currently, the U.S. and India are not involved in any bilateral or multilateral agreements.
- India initially published a notification asking for comments on the Organic Foods Regulation on March 31 (*BCI Monitor* 4-18-17). It was followed by a World Trade Organization (WTO) [notification](#) on May 4, and then the current draft notification in the Gazette of India which extends the comment period. [Comments](#) are [due](#) before July 22, 2017.

Vietnam Decree on Goods Labeling

- Vietnam issued a decree on April 14, 2017, regarding goods labeling. This decree is now in effect and prescribes the label contents for all food, beverages, and agricultural inputs sold in Vietnam, including imported goods.
- The decree stipulates that the mandatory information must be either fully in Vietnamese, or have a secondary content label in Vietnamese that is equivalent to the original label. Goods labels must state the name of the good, its origin, the date of manufacture and expiration written in the date-month-year format, as well as the name and address of the company which produced the goods.
- For food, the labels must list the following: 1) quantity; 2) date of manufacture; 3) expiration date; and 4) warnings (if any). Additionally for foodstuff, the labels must include: 5) instructions for usage and storage; and 6) ingredients, or ingredient quantities, in descending order of predominance by weight.
- There is a transitional period for goods that were labeled, produced, imported, and circulated before the decree went into effect on June 1. An unofficial translation of this decree is available in a USDA FAS GAIN [report](#).

Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Island Countries Sign Agreement for Closer Economic Relations

- Australia, New Zealand, and eight Pacific island countries [signed](#) the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus (PACER Plus) on June 14, 2017. PACER Plus is a regional trade agreement which commits all parties to economic cooperation and development, and aims to build a framework of international rules that will increase predictability, transparency, and stability in the regional business environment.
- In this agreement, Australia and New Zealand committed to guarantee their tariffs on Pacific island country products at zero to provide certainty for Pacific island country exporters. The Pacific island countries have committed to liberalizing tariffs gradually with each nation having an implementation period ranging from 3 to 35 years. Furthermore, PACER Plus requires the participating nations to immediately extend a tariff rate treatment no less favorable than the Most Favored Nation (MFN) tariff rate provided to non-participating parties.
- A [schedule](#) of tariff commitments made by each party is published on Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website, along with the full agreement.