

U/S Hormats' Remarks on Food Safety in a Global World

CEO Summit Briefing Center, Sheraton Waikiki, 2nd Floor

Saturday, November 12th, 3:20-3:50pm (5 mins of remarks)

This afternoon's event is a wonderful opportunity to recognize the progress that has been made to establish this World Bank administered trust fund.

As with many other facets of economic development, APEC is an ideal testing ground for this initiative.

This project is critically important for many reasons.

Globalization is a fact. Today, more than ever before, a person living in Boston is connected to a person living in Beijing or Bogotá by the food they eat, the car they drive, the medicine they take, and any number of other goods and services. This is a good thing. Globalization drives innovation and efficiency gains and, coupled with open trade, has improved the lives of millions.

But with increased globalization we need to adopt and maintain robust global systems to protect the health and safety of our citizens.

We're all connected in the current era of global supply chains, international trade, and the foreign sourcing and manufacture of regulated products.

Today, we're focusing on food safety in a global world. Consider just a few numbers: 10 to 15 percent of the entire U.S. food supply is imported, including about 50 percent of our fresh fruits, 20 percent of our vegetables, and 80 percent of our seafood.

And, in fact, the United States imported \$7.2 billion worth of food products from East Asia alone in 2010.

At the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Department of Agriculture, Environmental Protection Agency, and Department of State, we recognize how globalization has fundamentally altered the landscape for food supply chains for the United States, and the world.

The sheer volume of imports, the variety and complexity of products, and the intricate, lengthy, and often opaque nature of supply chains for goods before reaching consumers creates challenges to ensuring that all food products are safe and of high quality.

That's why the FDA now operates a total of 13 foreign posts. And under the recently enacted Food Safety Modernization Act, the FDA has a new mandate to require comprehensive, prevention-based controls across the food supply and new tools to hold players in the supply chain accountable.

From the State Department's perspective, we're working to maintain global food markets that are both open and protect consumer health and safety through science-based policies.

The State Department has funded a Phytosanitary Information Management System Program in Serbia; co-sponsored the Western Hemisphere Codex Colloquium in Latin America and the Caribbean; and funded an evaluation of Armenia's Food Safety program.

We want to do more.

Government policies that hinder trade will not fix food safety and security. Quite the contrary.

Open food markets can augment domestic food supplies to meet consumption needs; reduce supply variability; make more efficient use of world resources; and permit food production to take place in those regions most suited for it.

Trade is part of the solution, not part of the problem. But with an increasingly global food supply chain, we must work even harder together – governments, industry, and all stakeholders – to ensure that food is safe.

I commend Mars Corporation, Waters Corporation, and USAID for their leadership in providing seed money to this first-ever "Global Food Safety Fund" inspired by the collaboration that has taken place here in APEC. Industry has a vital role to play in ensuring food safety.

Beyond being the right thing to do, selling bad food products is simply bad business. Incidents of food-borne illness not only hurts the bottom-line of the company or companies that manufactured the contaminated food, it also threatens consumer confidence for the entire product category, industry, or even country.

What we have started here is a global public-private partnership with all the right players bringing their unique strengths to the table: The World Bank, governments, and industry.

But this is only the beginning. More resources and more partners will be needed to truly make a difference on a global scale.

I'd like to see the Fund grow so that training programs developed and tested in APEC economies can be deployed to the developing world—in Africa, the Middle East, and South America.

So while I congratulate you all on what you have achieved here today, let this also be a call to action for other governments and industry partners to join us in building this new collaborative, partnership model for ensuring public health and safety.

If we stay committed and work together, we can achieve the level of security that all of our citizens deserve.

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