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Effects of the Trans-Pacific Partnership on the Price and Accessibility of Nutritious Food

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ABSTRACT

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being of himself and his family, including food.” Every country in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), including the three from Latin America – Mexico, Chile, and Peru – are a part of The United Nations and have thus decided that this declared right to nutritious food is something to which every person is entitled. It is important to note that this “Right to Food” is intentionally specific. That is to say, it does not merely assert that food must be available, instead it specifies that everyone has the right to “a standard of living adequate for health and well-being.” This means that food must be both available AND nutritious in order to actualize this declared human right. The TPP challenges this “Right to Food” by changing the landscape of food acquisition and food quality. Historically, free trade agreements like NAFTA, have compromised the nutritional wellbeing of developing economies in favor of lenient regulatory laws which favor corporate interests. Vague clauses in the TPP regarding food safety and regulation suggest that not much has changed. Indeed, after extensive research, it seems as though the high levels of poor nutrition and obesity in Latin American countries will be exacerbated by the export of traditionally healthy foods, like quinoa, in exchange for processed, less nutritional alternatives. By replacing culturally significant and nutritious local foods with cheaper, processed foods from abroad, the TPP will create a trade dynamic which entrenches already poor nutrition in Latin American countries. In short, although cheaper, processed foods ostensibly increase food availability, the TPP makes no meaningful effort to ensure that this food is nutritious. In this way the TPP fails to uphold the universal “Right to Food” by stripping the right of its most central component: it’s link to a healthy standard of living.