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# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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**Approved By:**

Paul Spencer

**Prepared By:**

Leif Erik Rehder

**Report Highlights:** Germany's flagship national weekly news magazine, Der Spiegel, has published an article revealing how opposition to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) may unfold in German and in Europe. The article mentions, genetically engineered crops, post slaughter antimicrobial treatments, and animal growth promotants. This report provides an unofficial translation.

## General Information:

Unofficial Translation of Spiegel Article **Chlorine Chicken in Shitstorm**

(02/25/2013)

*[Translation & Background notes: Der Spiegel ("The Mirror") is Germany's flagship national weekly news magazine and, with a weekly circulation of more than one million, one of the largest publications of its kind in Europe. Der Spiegel is similar in style and layout to news magazines such as the Economist or Time. In 2012, the term 'shitstorm' won the University of Hamburg's 'Anglicism of the Year' contest. It refers to, 'a public outcry, primarily on the internet, in which arguments mix with threats and insults to reach a critical mass, forcing a reaction.' This translation may contain copyrighted material and is for internal use only.]*

# Chlorine Chicken in Shitstorm

Consumer protectionists and Internet activists mobilize against the proposed trade agreement between Europe and the United States. They fear bad compromises at the expense of consumers.

When it comes to personal meetings up until now, Angela Merkel and Barack Obama have had a rather one-sided relationship. The Chancellor has already been already in Washington numerous times, while the American President has never been to Berlin as President, despite several invitations.

In June, it could finally happen, according to Obama's advisers, if the president should end up coming to Berlin during his European tour. There are two opportunities: The legendary speech by John F. Kennedy ("Ich bin ein Berliner") marks its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. And negotiations on a transatlantic free trade agreement between Europe and the U.S. will start in the summer, as the President announced two weeks ago.

Industry representatives are already raving about the possibility of the free world, with its 800 million consumers, merging into a giant trading bloc with uniform rules. The American Chamber of Commerce in Germany promises higher growth, for the Chancery it is the cheapest kind of economic stimulus. With a combined market and uniform standards, patents and laws, the old industrialized countries want to counterbalance emerging China.

However, the planned trade union will by no means be automatic. Europe and the U.S. are facing painful years of negotiations and many critics say the whole thing is fantasy. Consumer protectionists, environmentalist and internet activists are getting ready to fight the agreement using all means. They fear that secret negotiations and compromises between the European Commission and the Obama administration will be at the expense of consumers.

"The agreement should not fail this time due to chlorine chicken," German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said often. He alludes to the fact that the Europeans do not like U.S. meat products that are disinfected in a chlorine bath and have banned their import. Disputes of this kind have already toppled many transatlantic agreements.

It sounds like petty details, but in reality it is about fundamental questions of consumer and citizen protection. What do we want to eat? How do they deal with our data on the Internet? In recent years there have emerged different traditions in the United States and Europe. Accordingly, there is great potential for conflict. For example, the sale of genetically modified foods in Europe is handled much more restrictively. Most Americans have nothing against such food if they are just cheap and look good.

Farmers in the U.S. are now using the technology nationwide. The plants are resistant to insects and bring greater yields per hectare. 88 percent of the corn grown in the United States last year came from genetically modified seeds, for soybeans it was 93, and for sugar beet it was 95 percent. "European transparency, freedom of choice and the precautionary principle should not be sacrificed to free trade," says Christoph Then, managing director of the anti-GM biotech association Testbiotech.

The U.S. farm lobby has long fought against the European barriers like genetic modified potatoes or hormone-treated beef. Now there is a large lever with the free trade agreement to crack the front of the Europeans.

Max Baucus, Democratic senator from Montana, listed in a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk, what he wants to achieve in the forthcoming negotiations. In his catalog are the EU restrictions on genetic modified crops, the use of hormones in cattle or "unscientific restrictions for the use of feed additives such as ractopamine for cattle and hogs," all sorts of positions that make European consumer protectionists sick. For example, American farmers use hormone rBST, which was developed by the agricultural company Monsanto. The substance reportedly increases milk production up to 20 percent and the meat yield up to 30 percent. However the agent is suspected to promote human cancer. In addition to high performance cows are increasingly treated with antibiotics because their mammary glands are inflamed more often. "If American hormone-treated beef comes to the European market, it will have significant implications for the European producers' warns Lutz Ribbe, agricultural expert of the environmental organization Euronatur. As the United States is producing cheaply, European farmers are at a clear competitive disadvantage, states Ribbe.

That the worries are justified is shown by free trade agreements with other countries. In the ongoing negotiations with India the EU wanted to introduce a chapter on "sustainable development" in the treaty, but the Indians refused. Negotiations with Canada have come to a standstill, partly because of disputes on agricultural issues.

In addition to free trade for agricultural products, the Americans will place copyrights in the center of the upcoming Transatlantic poker game. The motivation is underpinned by the commercial interests of Hollywood and Silicon Valley. They produce films and software that are globally sought after, but often can be easily copied. Therefore, the Americans have already negotiated with international partners, such as the EU, a trade agreement to protect copyrights, but then it was brought down by the European Parliament. The failure of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) was the first major victory of an international public network, which organized a Shitstorm on the Internet and major demonstrations in Warsaw, Berlin and Paris. The activists found internet freedom was at risk by ACTA.

Now, from the perspective of Jeremie Zimmermann, one of the organizers of the former movement, it's almost time again. The spokesperson of La Quadrature du Net, a Paris-based organization, can prove that old provisions from the failed ATCA Agreement were included in a preliminary version of the free trade agreement known as CETA, which the EU Commission is currently negotiating with the Canadians, which could serve as a blueprint for the agreement with the Americans.

"This is a popular game of the Internet industry, to hijack the free trade agreement for their own purposes," says Zimmermann. He sees democracy at risk when such negotiations dealing with the future of all citizens are taking place behind closed doors. "We can mobilize millions of citizens, when our freedom is threatened," he says.

The Member of European Parliament, Jan Philipp Albrecht from the Greens, an early opponent of ACTA, also thinks that things look pretty bleak for a transatlantic free trade agreement if the parliament is not involved at an early stage: "Otherwise, the trade agreement will fail because of civil society in Europe." Albrecht is rapporteur for the European Parliament for the proposed data protection regulation and he sees considerable potential for conflict. While U.S. companies can use the personal data of their customers almost without restriction, the Europeans are protected by minimum standards. It is almost impossible to find a compromise on this issue.

U.S. companies such as Facebook and Google consider European data protection a potential threat to their billion dollar profits. Just recently, authorities in Europe once again threatened to punish the internet giant Google over its handling of data on European customers.

There remains the possibility to exclude controversial issues such as agriculture and internet security from the negotiations on the free trade agreement. But, then very little remains of the project for a new transatlantic partnership. Tariffs, for example, are already so low, with an average of three percent, that they are not significant.

The free trade agreement is "by far our most important project for the future," says the Chancellor. It seems that not everybody in Europe thinks so.