

Far and Wide

Every week we share selection of six news from six continents that we believe will impact our world in the near or distant future

May 2024 | Issue #47



India plans to leverage South Africa's WTO case to push for EU food safety standard relaxation.

Welcome to the latest edition of Far and Wide, where we embark on a journey to explore intriguing stories and global developments.

India and South Africa are planning to utilize a new case filed by South Africa against the European Union's (EU) stringent food safety regulations on citrus fruits to advocate for relaxations in standards hindering various Indian food exports. The EU's strict norms have significantly limited India's exports of items such as chillies, tea, basmati rice, and more. India intends to support South Africa's challenge, given their alignment on global food safety issues. Ajay Srivastava, founder of the Global Trade Research Initiative, emphasizes the importance of supporting South Africa to address broader trade barriers affecting multiple exporting countries.

South Africa alleges that the EU's regulations, particularly concerning the False Codling Moth, unfairly restrict citrus fruit imports, violating WTO rules. The dispute occurs amidst India and Pakistan's disagreement over Basmati rice's Geographical Indication registration in the EU, further straining relations.

Despite challenges, Indian exports of agricultural products to Europe have increased, with fruits and vegetables like grapes, mangoes, and onions being major exports. However, issues persist, especially regarding Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, which are expected to be discussed during upcoming FTA negotiations.

The EU insists on strict SPS import rules to ensure consumer safety and protect plant and animal production. These rules remain non-negotiable, and applicable to all imports regardless of FTAs. South Africa has challenged the EU's restrictions on citrus fruits at the WTO, citing inconsistencies with WTO agreements on SPS measures.

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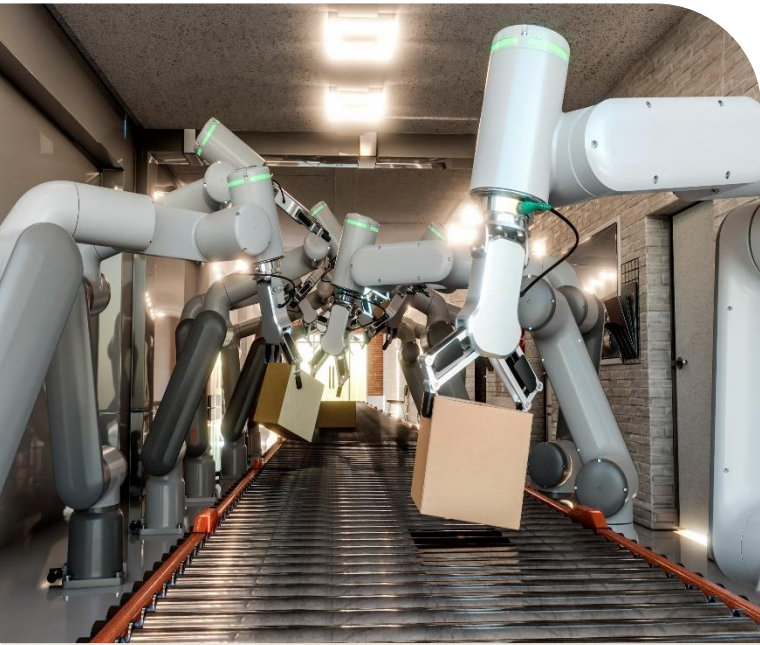


Policy

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Brazil's government to launch commission to unlock South American integration projects

India to leverage South Africa's WTO case to push for relaxation of EU food safety standards



Source: Mint

<https://www.livemint.com/economy/eur-ope-takes-radical-steps-to-boost-production-there-is-no-other-option-11714640726467.html>

The proposal, supported by EU internal market commissioner **Thierry Breton**, aligns with efforts to match subsidies offered by other major economies, highlighting a **shift towards a more interventionist economic approach**. However, challenges remain, including potential opposition from member states and **concerns about the effectiveness of such large-scale funding** in fostering competitiveness and sustainability.



Europe

Europe takes radical steps to boost defence production; 'There is no other option'

A European Union official proposed a **€100 billion public fund** to reduce Europe's reliance on U.S. **defence manufacturers**, who currently supply nearly **two-thirds of the continent's military hardware**. The proposal aims to subsidize European companies for **developing and manufacturing more weapons** domestically amid **growing threats from Russia**. While the idea faces **skepticism due to historical EU policies** limiting state support for domestic firms, recent developments signal a shift. The EU **unveiled a €1.5 billion plan to increase domestic defence equipment** procurement and discussions among European leaders at a summit focused on **boosting funding for the defence industry**.

This marks a **departure from previous EU policies**, reflecting a broader trend of breaking longstanding taboos **to strengthen domestic businesses and remain competitive** with global powers like the U.S. and China.



North America

Canada will not be renewing off-campus work policy for international students

Starting this fall semester, international **students in Canada** will face a new limit of **24 hours per week** for **off-campus work during the academic year**. Immigration **Minister Marc Miller** announced that the **temporary measure allowing** unlimited work hours **while classes are in session**, will not continue. Minister Miller stated that the **change aims to prioritize students'** academic success and **deter those primarily seeking employment**.

He emphasised, the **importance of students being prepared for life in Canada** and **reiterated the need to protect the integrity** of the student program.

The **24-hour limit** represents an increase from the **pre-2022 rule of 20 hours** per week but is a significant reduction from the recent unlimited work policy.

Minister Miller suggested that this limit, **along with increased cost-of-living requirements, should suffice**. Additional changes include the requirement for a **Provincial Attestation Letter (PAL)** and the **Trusted Institutions Framework for designated learning institutions (DLIs)**, aiming to cap study permit processing in 2024 and ensure adequate support for international students.

These adjustments align with efforts to balance academic and work commitments while upholding program integrity



Source: Economic Times

https://m.economictimes.com/nri/work/canada-will-not-be-renewing-this-temporary-off-campus-work-policy-for-international-students/amp_articleshow/109718533.cms



South America

Brazil's government to launch commission to unlock South American integration projects

Brazil's government plans to **establish an interministerial commission**, led by the Planning Ministry, to drive integration projects across South America, announced Renata Amaral, Secretary of International Affairs and Development. **President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva will enact a decree to formalise the commission's role in streamlining internal processes to kick-start projects.**

Last year, it was **revealed that \$10 billion would be allocated by multilateral banks** to finance infrastructure projects in South America, with \$3 billion designated for Brazil by the **Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES).**

Despite **potential political divisions** due to the U.S. presidential election, Brazil sees collaboration from neighbouring countries, including Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

Source: Reuters

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/brazils-government-launch-commission-unlock-south-american-integration-projects-2024-04-29/>

The government **fulfilled a \$100 million commitment** to the **Structural Convergence Fund of Mercosur (Focem)** to strengthen regional ties. The eight projects' recent approval aims to enhance both **trade and infrastructure** connectivity. However, according to Amaral, significant developments in **Mercosur-European Union** negotiations may be delayed until after the **European Parliament elections in June.**



Asia

ADB's numbers on climate adaptation finance in Asia 'overstated': Oxfam

Oxfam's recent report claims that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has **overstated its climate adaptation finance figures** for major projects in Asia. According to Oxfam, the actual amount **may be 44% lower than reported**, with **\$0.9 billion instead of \$1.7 billion.**

Oxfam also criticizes the **distribution of funds**, noting a **small portion reaching Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries.** They argue that loans, which make up a significant portion of ADB's financing, **should not be counted as climate adaptation finance** due to the risk of **increasing debt burdens.**

In response, the ADB defended its figures, stating its commitment to delivering **\$100 billion in climate financing by 2030**, with a substantial portion **allocated for adaptation.**

They emphasized their **methodology's consistency and highlighted a significant increase in climate finance commitments in 2023.** The ADB spokesperson noted **differences in methodology between Oxfam's report and ADB's reporting** and reiterated their determination to support climate financing efforts in the region.



Source: Business Standard

https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/adb-s-numbers-on-climate-adaptation-finance-in-asia-overstated-oxfam-124050200058_1.html



Australia

India, Australia to speed up trade deal after Lok Sabha elections

India and Australia are set to accelerate negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) after India's Lok Sabha elections.

Sources revealed plans for extensive discussions on various aspects, including digital trade, goods, services, rules of origin, and government procurement.

Both countries aim to deepen market access and enhance cooperation.

Discussions are expected to intensify post-elections to swiftly advance towards a comprehensive trade deal.

Source: Business Standard

https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/india-australia-to-expedite-trade-deal-talks-after-lok-sabha-elections-124050300943_1.html

India seeks to position itself at the core of future supply chains, and a robust partnership with Australia is seen as beneficial due to the complementary nature of their economies.



Africa

India to leverage South Africa's WTO case to push for relaxation of EU food safety standards

India plans to advocate for relaxed food safety standards imposed by the **European Union (EU)** on various **Indian food exports**, leveraging a case filed by South Africa against strict regulations on citrus fruit. These norms significantly limit India's exports of items such as **chillies, tea, basmati rice, and more**.

India intends to support South Africa's challenge, aiming to address broader concerns about the EU's trade barriers affecting multiple exporting countries.

Ajay Srivastava, founder of the **Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI)**, highlights the importance of **India's support for South Africa in addressing trade barriers**.

Meanwhile, the dispute occurs alongside an India-Pakistan disagreement over the **Geographical Indication (GI) registration** of Basmati rice in the EU.

Indian agricultural exports to Europe have risen, with plans to discuss trade issues during upcoming negotiations. The EU emphasizes the importance of strict food safety standards, which remain non-negotiable even **after Free Trade Agreement (FTA) implementation**.



Source: Mint

<https://www.livemint.com/politics/policy/india-to-leverage-south-africas-wto-case-to-push-for-relaxation-of-eu-food-safety-standards-11714904411036.html>