The GlobalGAP[1]

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I Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the sustainability implications for the South of one of the most prominent private standards in food governance, the Global Partnership for Good Agricultural Practice (GlobalGAP). Specifically, the chapter employs a governance approach, focusing on the pivotal role of GlobalGAP in shaping rural livelihoods and sustainability objectives for the agriculture and food sector in developing countries. In pursuit of its objectives, this chapter presents the evolving governance structures, aims and rhetoric of GlobalGAP, and evaluates its effectiveness and (perceived) legitimacy. The analysis aims to unravel the dynamics and conditions under which GlobalGAP can contribute to a more sustainable and equitable development of the food sector in the South.

Food security, food safety and environmental sustainability are essential preconditions for the well-being of societies worldwide. The fulfilment of these conditions is particularly challenging for the global South, whose constant struggle with poverty, hunger and environmental degradation has been aggravated by contemporary events, such as the food crisis and the global economic downturn. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that the number of people suffering from hunger and malnutrition rose to more than one billion in 2009, with women and children most seriously affected (FAO 2009). Global environmental challenges, in particular climate change, as well as pollution and water shortages, are expected to multiply threats to the provision of adequate amounts of nutritious and safe food (High Representative and EU Commission 2008). At the same time, hazardous environmental practices in agriculture also have negative health repercussions. Pesticide poisoning by farmers and rural workers, for instance, is a frequent phenomenon in developing countries, while legal provisions for workers' health and safety are almost non-existent. In general, labour standards in agriculture tend to be extremely low.

Private food governance promises to address these concerns on the basis of voluntary standards, corporate social responsibility initiatives and codes of conduct. GlobalGAP is a pivotal private standard that targets issues of food safety, as well as environmental and labour concerns. Against this background, the paper inquires into the potential of GlobalGAP for fostering sustainability objectives in the South. Given its increasing prominence, GlobalGAP can be a leading force in

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reversing certain trends with respect to sustainability and/or exacerbating others. The paper also evaluates the legitimacy of GlobalGAP, both towards its stakeholders and the broader polity, in order to identify opportunities and constraints for a more participatory, transparent and accountable development of the food sector in the South.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, we provide a brief background on the origin of the GlobalGAP, lay out its instruments and governance structure, and explore changes that have occurred within the organization over time. Second, we evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative, both on its own terms and with respect to broader sustainability objectives and recognized international development standards. Third, we discuss existing criticism of the initiative and try to identify sources of potential shortcomings. We conclude by deriving policy recommendations and strategies for the improvement of the GlobalGAP from the perspective of developing countries.

II. Background[2]

Origin

GlobalGAP is a private sector body that sets voluntary standards for the certification of agricultural products around the globe. It aims to establish one standard for Good Agricultural Practice (GAP.) with different product applications capable of fitting to the whole range of global conventional agricultural products. GlobalGAP is a pre-farm-gate standard, which means that the certificate covers the processing of the certified product from farm inputs like feed or seedlings and all the farming activities until the product leaves the farm. Moreover, it is a business-to-business label not directly visible to consumers.

The standard (first known as EurepGAP) was initiated in 1997 by retailers belonging to the Euro-Retailer Produce Working Group (EUREP). The driving forces were British retailers in conjunction with supermarkets in continental Europe, who wanted to harmonize their own standards on product safety, as well as environmental well-being and labour welfare. More specifically, by the mid-1990s, most European supermarket chains created variations of "integrated crop management" (ICM) systems. This can be understood as an effort to reach consumers with preferences for sustainable products, without having to invest many resources in the niche organic market (Campbell and Le Heron 2007). As ICM was not based on any social movement defining a common set of standards, each supermarket created its own. This had negative consequences for suppliers, who had to undergo dozens of different audits for slightly

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[2] Most of the information provided in this section is based on the official website of GlobalGAP as well as documents on former versions of GlobalGAP standards provided by the GlobalGAP Secretariat..

different standards. As a consequence, EurepGAP developed a harmonized set of good agricultural practice standards.

Over the next decade, EurepGAP began to gain in global significance as a growing number of producers and retailers around the globe joined in. To reflect the new global status of the standard, EurepGAP was rebranded to GlobalGAP, at the 8th global conference in Bangkok in September 2007. While initially only applying to fruits and vegetables, it now covers meat products and fish from aquaculture as well. It is currently implemented in more than 100 countries and covers 94,000 suppliers worldwide with a growing membership every year.

Instruments

GlobalGAP consists of a set of normative documents. These documents include the General Regulations, the Control Points and Compliance Criteria (CPCC) Protocol and the Checklist. These are explained in some detail below.

The general regulations set out the rules by which the standard is administered. This document describes the basic steps and considerations involved for the applicant to obtain and maintain GlobalGAP certification, as well as the role of producers, GlobalGAP and certification bodies. It consists of five different parts: (i) laying out some general information explaining what GlobalGAP is, describing the certification process, training etc., (ii) the certification body rules, containing important information for certification and accreditation bodies, (iii) the producer group certification, also known as option 2 (in contrast to option 1 which is individual certification), iv) benchmarking which explains GlobalGAP certification for those rules that are found to be technically equivalent to GlobalGAP, and v) training regulations important for members who want to become approved GlobalGAP trainers or already are approved trainers.

The CPCC Protocol is the standard with which farmers must comply and which are audited to verify compliance. This document is divided into modules, listing for each scope and sub-scope the control points, compliance criteria and the level of compliance required. The levels can be Major Must, Minor Must or Recommendation. Completion and verification of a checklist consisting of 254 questions is required in order to acquire GlobalGAP certification (see below). Control Points include the following: record keeping and internal self-assessment/internal inspection, site history and site management, workers' health safety and welfare, waste and

pollution management, recycling and re-use, environment and conservation, complaints, and traceability.[3]

Checklists are used by farmers to fulfil the annual internal audit requirement and also form the basis of the farmers' external audit. They replicate the Control Points in the CPCC, and are therefore also composed of modular sections. There are three checklist types in GlobalGAP:

a) The checklist used for inspecting producers, which contains all the Control Points. It *must* be used during inspections by the Certification Board and *can* also be used by the producer/group when performing self-assessments. This checklist is divided into 41 "major musts", 122 "minor musts" as well as 91 recommendations ("shoulds").

b) The Quality Management Systems Checklist used for auditing producer group Quality Management Systems (QMS). The producer group can also use this checklist when performing internal QMS audits.

c) The Benchmarking Cross-Reference Checklist (BMCL) or the Approved Modified Checklist (AMC) used by applicant scheme owners applying for benchmarking against GlobalGAP to show equivalence.

In addition to these normative documents, guidelines for dealing with general interpretation and application of Control Points and guidelines dealing with specific geographic and cultural differences also exist. These need to be approved and issued by the relevant Sector Committee (SC), with support from the recognised GlobalGAP National Technical Working Groups. Where necessary, the SCs combine interpretations common to national interpretation guidelines to develop a global guideline. All normative documents, as well as additional guiding documents are available free of charge on the GlobalGAP website (www.globalgap.org). The GlobalGAP standard is subject to a three year revision process to take into account technological and market developments.

Membership

GlobalGAP membership consists of three groups: retailers and food service members, suppliers and associate members (see Table 1). Membership has varied during the years, with new members joining in and some dropping out (see also van der Grijp et al. 2005). At the moment, the geographic coverage of the standard is universal. Europe, however, clearly dominates in all three categories. Especially in the retail sector it represents almost 93 percent of the members. In the other two categories, the percentage of European presence is slightly lower, with 72 percent of the

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[3] There are more specific control points for each of the different products covered by GlobalGAP, that is crops, fruits and vegetables, combinable crops, coffee, tea, flower and ornamentals, livestock, cattle and ship, dairy, pig, poultry, and aquaculture.

supplier members and 63 percent of the associate members. In total, Europe represents 72 percent of total GlobalGAP membership.

Membership in SCs reflects that trend as well. More specifically, there are three sector committees: crops, livestock and aquaculture. In the crops committee, until 2009 20 out of 25 members were European, representing 80 percent of the membership. Non-European members were from Chile, Brazil (2), South Africa and Japan. In 2009, membership changed dramatically, however. Specifically, 15 out of 24 members are European dropping the percentage to 62.5 percent. New geographic coverage developed as well with members from USA, Kenya, South Africa and New Zealand joining. Uruguay and an additional member from Chile joined as well thus increasing Latin American participation. In the livestock committee, 13 out of 16 members are European, representing 81.25 percent. Here non-European membership declined and European participation increased even further. Specifically, 12 out of 13 members (92.3 percent) are now European. The only non-European member is from Uruguay. Finally, the aquaculture committee is completely Europe dominated. Moreover, Germany, Netherlands and the UK are overrepresented. This situation remained the same in 2009.

Table 1. Membership of GlobalGAP 2009

Continent	Retailer and Food Service member	Supplier member	Associate member	Total
Africa	0	9	6	15
Asia	1	4	10	15
Australia and New Zealand	0	3	3	6
Europe	40	114	66	220
Middle East	0	3	1	4
North America	2	9	8	19
Latin America	0	15	11	26
Total	43	157	105	305

Source:www2.gobalgap.org (17.09.09)

Governance Structure

Governance is conducted by a Board, whose decisions are based on a structured consultation process (see Figure 1). The Board constitutes an equal number of elected producer and retailer representatives and is chaired by an independent chairperson. In March 2006, a number of SCs were established which discuss and decide upon product and sector specific issues. All committees have 50 percent retailer and 50 percent producer/supplier representation. In 2007, the SCs replaced the Technical and Standards Committee (TSC).

The SC members are elected for a period of three years by their peers (Supplier and Retailer GlobalGAP members). The SCs mostly work independently from the Board, but within the policy framework created by the Board. They are responsible for technical decision-making relevant to their sector, while being supported and guided by the GlobalGAP Secretariat to aid consistency and harmonization. Ultimately, the Board adopts standards developed or revised by the SCs. The SCs also operate as consultative bodies and from time to time may be requested by the GlobalGAP Board to deal with any specific matters that require product or sector input.

Figure 1. Governance Structure of GlobalGAP
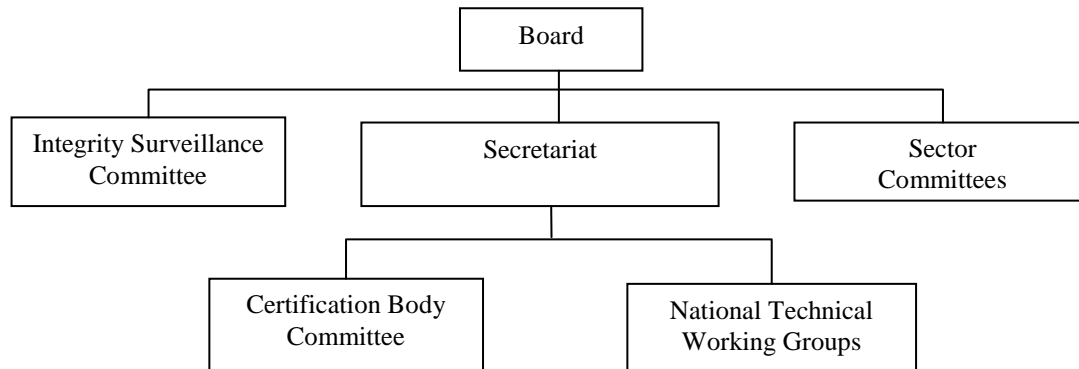
Source: Globalgap News, September 2009, p. 8.

The work of the Board and Committees is supported by FoodPLUS GmbH, a non-profit limited company based in Cologne, Germany, fulfilling a secretariat function for GlobalGAP. The executive management of FoodPLUS GmbH, i.e. its Managing Director, bears responsibility for the implementation of policies and standards. Financial and legal ownership and responsibility for FoodPLUS GmbH is held by the EHI Retail Institute via its 100 percent subsidiary EHI-Verwaltungsgesellschaft mbH. The EHI Retail Institute also operates the European Retail Academy, a global network of research institutes linked to retail activities and topics.

Next to the main governing bodies, GlobalGAP has established National Technical Working Groups (NTWG) to facilitate implementation of global regulations locally. Their role is to develop a series of national interpretation guidelines as well as address specific local adaptation and implementation challenges. NTWGs are established voluntarily by GlobalGAP members in countries where there is a need for clarifying GlobalGAP implementations on a local scale. The guidelines developed by this growing number of groups are approved by the SCs and are published on the GlobalGAP website. The groups are established and work in close cooperation with the GlobalGAP Secretariat and the SC and support the GlobalGAP implementation and continuous improvement based on specific area needs.

Finally, GlobalGAP is associate body member of the International Accreditation Forum, hereby supporting the objectives of international accreditation to ISO guidelines. To manage the specific technical feedback coming from more than 100,000 audits worldwide, GlobalGAP has implemented a Certification Body Committee (CBC). Its main function is to harmonize the interpretation of the compliance criteria set by the SCs, as well as discuss GlobalGAP implementation issues and provide feedback. Moreoever, CBC represents the GlobalGAP-approved Certification Bodies' activity within the GlobalGAP system.

The CBC is composed of experts employed by Certification Bodies that are GlobalGAP associate members and ISO Guide 65 accredited to at least one GlobalGAP scope. Members are elected by their peers (Certification Bodies that are GlobalGAP members) for a three year period. The CBC is supported and facilitated in its work by the GlobalGAP Secretariat. Any proposals for change that have been put forward by the CBC need to be finally approved by the SCs.

III. Effectiveness

In private forms of governance, effectiveness is a crucial criterion for their legitimacy as it is frequently identified as their claim to legitimacy. Private actors, after all, are not elected to political office, providing them with the authority to set rules and determine the societal allocation of values. Rather than drawing authority from democratic elections and formal office, legitimacy claims of private rule setting tend to derive from the notion that it can provide certain governance functions more effectively and efficiently than elected public actors.

Following Easton, effectiveness can be measured along three dimensions: output, outcome and impact (Easton 1965; Fuchs 2006). The particular standard can be considered as output. The actual change in business conduct achieved in the course of a standard's implementation, i.e. contribution to problem-solving, represents the outcome. The general change resulting from the interaction with additional economic, social and political externalities is the impact. The question about the effectiveness of private governance has to refer to changes in business conduct achieved in the course of the implementation of the agreed standard (outcome). This outcome is a function of the agreed standard (output) and of existing incentives and opportunities to meet the standard, to outperform it or to fail to comply (Fuchs 2006). After all, not only the regulations defined by the private standard are of interest here. Rather, the implementation of the private standard and the change in actual conduct achieved by that implementation matters. At the same time, the private regulation cannot be held responsible for simultaneous developments in complex socio-economic systems, at least not by itself.

From the Perspective of the GlobalGAP

GlobalGAP presents itself as a comprehensive standard covering food safety and sustainability requirements in conventional agriculture chains. Effectiveness, in the perspective of GlobalGAP, means increasing coverage and delivering consistent output through benchmarked schemes and auditing mechanisms.GlobalGAP reports extensively on its outcome in terms of certified producers. In 2008, GlobalGAP had 94,000 certified producers, up from 18,000 in 2004, representing an increase of approx. 80 percent. More than 20 countries joined in 2008. In total, over 85 countries are represented. There is significant growth within European countries, particularly due to French and German supermarkets managing to reach out to more producers (Annual Report 2009, 21.09.09). Significant growth is also seen within countries that hold a (major) global supply position in produce, mainly South Africa and Chile. Smaller growth is observed in Central and Eastern Europe, Central America and some African countries (ibid.). The majority of producers (67 percent) opt for a group certificate.

Impact is referred to mainly as providing more producers with access to the market. GlobalGAP holds a series of "success stories" where it presents its social and market impact including the launching of new certificates, pilot projects, and corporate social responsibility initiatives. As these stories reflect selected cases, they do not represent the overall GlobalGAP performance, however. Moreover, such reporting is voluntary and has not undergone external evaluations.

From the Perspective of Sustainable Development and International Development Standards

A look at GlobalGAP from the outside reveals that its effects on (sustainable) development are highly ambivalent. Research has shown it to be somewhat effective at improving food safety. This effect mainly exists for consumers in Northern countries, however, and even here not all health scares have been avoided.

Most importantly from the perspective of (sustainable) development, the GlobalGAP carries potentially highly damaging consequences for food security in developing countries (Fuchs, Kalfagianni, and Arentsen 2009). In particular, the high costs of implementation and certification of the standard are difficult afford for small farmers in developing countries (FAO 2006; Hatanaka et al. 2005). Without such certification, however, these smaller farmers have little chance of selling their products in the global market, as the global food retail market is highly oligopolistic and most major retail chains demand GlobalGAP certification (or similar standards). The consequences of GlobalGAP for food security, the most fundamental development issue, are very problematic then.

In terms of environmental consequences, the effects of GlobalGAP are ambivalent as well. While the standard does address some environmental issues – in contrast to a variety of other private standards, which only focus on food safety – the issue coverage is selective. In addition, many environmental concerns are only recommendations, and non-compliance does not prevent certification (Fuchs, Kalfagianni, and Havinga 2010; Van der Grijp et al. 2005). Accordingly, the environmental benefits of the GlobalGAP are much smaller than the rhetoric of GlobalGAP and its associated retailers suggests and Northern consumers are likely to believe.

Tracing developments in the standard allows determining how these issues have fared over time. GlobalGAP publishes a new version of the standard every three years to account for technological and market developments. The most recent one is the 2007 version, which replaces those of 2004 and 2001. Thus a comparison of the different versions reveals the shift in the weights among the different criteria represented in GlobalGAP. More specifically, issues related to record keeping and internal self-inspection have been reinforced between 2001 and 2004. Likewise, hygiene requirements have also been strengthened. Issues related to environmental well-being, however, have been weakened. Specifically, quality of irrigation water (except for sewage water which is a major must in both versions), recycling and re-use, impact of farming on the environment and wildlife and conservation policies, while constituted minor musts in 2001, are mere recommendations in 2004 and remain so in 2007.

Issues related to worker health and safety also lost status in 2004, from minor musts to recommendations. Issues related to worker welfare have been reduced from 10 to 3, in 2004. Two of them, however, have acquired minor status (before they were recommendations). Specifically those related to identifying a member of management responsible for worker health and safety and welfare issues and the habitability of on-site living quarters including basic services and facilities for rural workers.

Significantly, in 2007, an emphasis on worker welfare has been reintroduced. Recommendations regained their minor status, while some major points have been added. In August 2008, GlobalGAP introduced The GlobalGAP Risk Assessment on Social Practice (GRASP). It is designed to run for 18 months, covering regional adaptation and implementation in at least four pilot projects. The first pilot project was scheduled for November 2008 in Spain. Other regions like Latin America, Africa and Asia will follow in 2009. GRASP contains 14 criteria based on ILO conventions. It is not a full social audit and does not replace such an approach. GRASP rather is a tool that helps implementing a Social Management System in mainstream agriculture. Its

findings can serve to assess whether a full social audit may be necessary. Importantly, the GRASP assessment will NOT form part of the accredited certification. The GRASP Assessments are conducted on a voluntary basis.[4] However, when a GRASP Assessment is conducted, its results will be made visible in the GlobalGAP database. The first GRASP training is scheduled to take place on October 31st, 2008, in Madrid, Spain.

Waste and pollution management, which were reduced to recommendations in 2004, experienced some changes too. Identification of waste and pollutants regained their minor status. The provision "all farms must be clear of litter and waste" now has become a major must. The other three requirements remain recommendations. The Environment and Conservation Control Points remain recommendations as well.

In sum, the effectiveness of GlobalGAP from the perspective of general development requirements is far from satisfactory. Indeed, GlobalGAP serves the needs of Northern consumers (and thereby the needs of global retail corporations), and even those only to a limited extent. It has yet to prove positive effects for sustainable development in developing countries, however.

Figure 2. Emphasis on Sustainability Issues within GlobalGAP
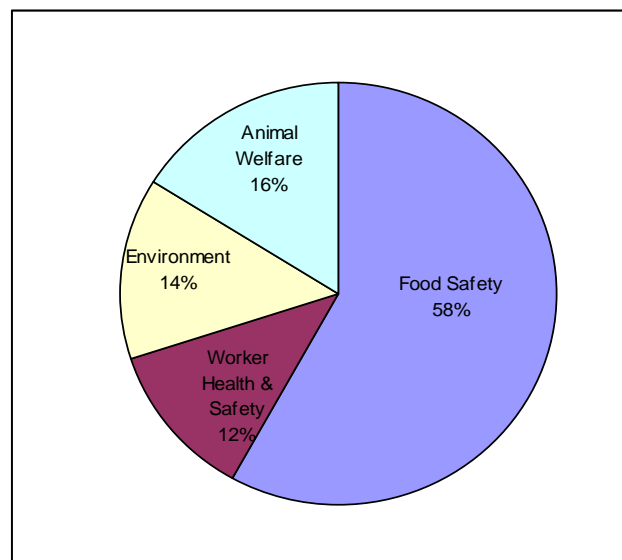
Source: Own representation of data from Globalgap News, October 2008, p. 21

IV. Critiques of the GlobalGAP

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[4] in conjunction with the annual GlobalGAP audit, so that additional audit costs are minimized

Three main criticisms are associated with GlobalGAP. The first relates to the social impacts of the standard, particularly for small farmers in the South. As pointed out above, critical observers have argued that thousands of farmers are losing access to the market due to the high costs associated with the implementation and monitoring of the standards, (Action Aid 2005). The costs provide a particular challenge for small farmers with small economies of scale and limited access to credit.

Taking into account these concerns, GlobalGAP has recently initiated a project to foster group certification for smallholders. The aim is to reduce external certification costs, such as inspection charges. This aim is to be reached via the centralization of (e.g. pesticide controls), for instance, which would help groups of farmers to benefit from scale effects. Based on this possibility of suppliers to obtain group certification, GlobalGAP increasingly emphasizes its relevance particularly for smallholders.

Moreover, the GlobalGAP has institutionalized a number of organizational measures for improving the situation of smallholders. The Standard Manager of GlobalGAP has to regularly inform the SCs about the progress of the CBC Smallholder Involvement. In May 2007, GlobalGAP has started the Smallholder Ambassador/ Africa observer project funded by the Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) and the Department for International Development (DFID) to incorporate the interests of smallholders. The objective of this project was to provide feedback from smallholders to the SCs. In a second phase of the project, Stephen Mbithi was nominated to continue the project developing practical input for the standard reflecting the situation of smallholders. Further information can be obtained from the independent website www.africa-observer.info Since February 2008, the Smallholder Task-Force has been established. It is calling for constructive proposals regarding improvements of the certification rules for smallholders.

Next to social concerns, GlobalGAP has attracted criticisms regarding its democratic legitimacy. An examination of the participation, transparency and accountability dimensions has revealed several aspects that need improvement (Fuchs and Kalfagianni 2010). As shown above, participation, even though equal for suppliers and retailers in the committees, is Europe dominated. Regarding transparency, several positive qualities have been identified including the public forum, etc. However, performance related transparency is weak and selective. Finally, the biggest concern, related to all private standards of course, is accountability. Internal accountability is provided to the standard's shareholders through internal reporting and peer review mechanisms, and external accountability in the narrow sense through the auditing by external auditors. Accountability to the public, however, is lacking. It is also difficult to always ensure

accountability to the regulatees even though potential mechanisms of appeal exist. It is doubtful that farmers, particularly uneducated poor farmers, have the necessary knowledge and organizational capacities to challenge GlobalGAP.

A final critique is associated to the lowering of attention to a range of environmental concerns within GlobalGap, mentioned above. As many other food safety standards exist in food governance and GlobalGap is the only retail standard that pays some attention to sustainability, the lowering of the significance of various environmental criteria is unfortunate.

V. Policy Recommendations and Strategies for Change

GlobalGAP was not created as a development standards, i.e. with the interests of Southern farmers in mind. Rather, GlobalGAP was meant to reduce the economic risks for Northern retailers resulting from the potential for political consumerism. Northern consumers became increasingly sensitized to questions of food safety and to some extent the environmental externalities of food products and processes. Given the structural power retail corporations hold in today's global food system, they were able to create and impose standards fulfilling their need of presenting good effort towards consumers.

NGOs and scientists, however, soon highlighted the potentially highly adverse consequences of the GlobalGAP for food security (and a range of environmental issues), In this respect, though, retailers face a real dilemma. They can reduce the costs of standard implementation only by lowering the criteria defined, which in environmental terms, however, are already too weak from the perspective of environmental NGOs, for instance. Yet, if the GlobalGAP takes the criticism towards its environmental performance seriously, implementation costs will rise even more, again potentially damaging the livelihoods of thousands of small farmers in developing countries. The GlobalGAP would only be able to avoid this consequence, then, if the prices paid to suppliers were raised along with the implementation costs. This, however, retailers are unwilling to do because of the fear of declining profits due to shrinking margins or lower sales. Yet, a fundamental improvement in the situation is not possible otherwise.

Given that retailers, who still dominate decisions within GlobalGAP, are unlikely to pursue the above strategy on their own, a public framing of private food retail governance is necessary. Such a public governance frame will have to ensure that the social externalities created by such private regulation have to be addressed, if not internalized. NGO pressure and scientific studies were sufficient to force GlobalGAP to start addressing the questions of developing country, and

especially smallholder, representation in its governance structures, as well as of certification costs. These efforts may well help improve some of the weaknesses of GlobalGAP in terms of its effects on sustainability mentioned above.

However, the efforts undertaken in this respect fail to promise the solution of the fundamental problem identified above. Clearly, group certification as well as support of small holder certification by international and development organizations, such as the FAO or GTZ, or even individual corporations such as Starbucks, has helped in some cases with respect to certification costs. Food products, which are produced under high environmental and social standards, however, will have to have a certain price. Current market dynamics with the concentration of economic power in the hands of Northern retailers and consumers are unlikely to foster the development of such prices without government intervention.

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