

CUTS CITEE IN ACTION

OCTOBER- DECEMBER 2019



EVENTS

Report Launch Unleashing E-Commerce for South Asian Integration

The World Bank Group, in association with CUTS International, organised a launch event for its report "Unleashing E-Commerce for South Asian Integration" at New Delhi on December 16, 2019.

This report is part of the World Bank's broader work programme on shaping a more positive narrative on regional integration in South Asia and follows a recent flagship report 'A Glass Half Full: The Promise of Regional Trade in South Asia' published in 2018.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/report-launch-unleashing-e-commerce-for-south-asian-integration-16-12-2019.pdf>





PUBLICATION

Ensuring Consumer Well-being through Better Standards and Regulations

Under the realm of consumer protection, the 'right to safety' ensures protection against the marketing of goods and services that are hazardous to life and property. To realise this, safety standards are designed and implemented by authorities to ensure the safety of products, activities or processes. Being a consumer organisation, CUTS has undertaken several projects on standards of goods, food items and services.

CUTS interventions in the domain of standards, include policy research, advocacy, networking and awareness generation. Other than educating consumers on the significance of standards and quality products, CUTS supports policy reforms through multi-stakeholder engagement and evidence generation at ground level.

Food Safety and Standards

- Engagement with the government and key stakeholders and simultaneously generating **awareness amongst consumers about healthy eating habits**
- Expediting the **legislative amendment process related to trans-fats** in India through bottom-up demand of common consumers
- Promoting consumption of organic food by **demand and supply-side management** in the state of Rajasthan, i.e. educating consumers about the safety and quality of the food and sending farmers for shifting towards organic farming and advocacy with government to promote the same
- Celebrating **Green Action Week** in the month of October since 2013 with the theme 'Safe and More Sustainable Food for All' to promote sustainable consumption in India.
- Organising **awareness generation and campaigns** in schools, villages, towns and municipalities of Rajasthan on safe food, food labelling regulations etc.

<https://cuts-int.org/support-strong-food-labelling-regulations-and-elimination-of-trans-fat-in-india/>
<https://cuts-int.org/development-of-trans-fat-in-india/>
<https://cuts-int.org/developing-a-culture-of-sustainable-consumption-and-lifestyle-through-organic-production-and-consumption-in-state-of-rajasthan-pragmatic-ii/>
<https://cuts-int.org/through-consumer-safety-in-india-and-to-publish-the-state-of-consumers-safety-in-india-report-consumers-ii/>
<https://cuts-int.org/grassroots-reach-out-and-networking-in-rajasthan-through-consumer-action-grant-ii/>

STAKEHOLDERS

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)
 Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoH&FW)
 Ministries of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
 Ministry of Commerce
 Ministry of Consumer Affairs
 Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)
 Consumers, farmer, school children, policy makers, local government, business and business associations

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<https://cuts-international.org/PDF/better-standards-and-regulations.pdf>



PARTICIPATION

- Veena Vidyadharan and Saurabh Kumar participated in the Strategic Planning Meeting organised by Oxfam India under the programme 'Transboundary Rivers of South Asia' (TROSA) at Kokrajhar, Assam on October 22, 2019. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the year 3 preparatory work of the project, methodology for research activities and availability of resources. CUTS has partnered with Oxfam and North East Research and Social Work Networking (NERSWN) to conduct a study on 'Inclusive Spaces on Transboundary Trade and Ease of Business focussing on Emerging Opportunities of Riparian Women SHGs in Dhubri-Rowmari region at India-Bangladesh Border'.



India should join RCEP and not obsess over trade gaps

Live Mint, November 27, 2019, By Pradeep S. Mehta

The import of intermediate goods would allow high domestic value addition and generate jobs

US President Donald Trump has been warring with many countries, including India, on America's trade deficit with them. China is a bugbear for the US because of its trade deficit of US\$378.7bn. China has also turned out to be a problem for India, but our deficit with it is about US\$60bn. We logged out of the long-negotiated Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement as we were afraid of being swamped with cheap Chinese goods and were worried that our existing trade deficit with China will increase and that such a deal would result in some of our factories shutting down. Alas, the calculus is not so cut and dried and we are making a big mistake by not joining RCEP because we need low-barrier export markets and faster economic growth.

<https://cuts-citee.org/india-should-join-rcep-and-not-obsess-over-trade-gaps/>

Occasional News Wrap – #1/December 2019

Why India Should Reconsider Joining RCEP?

September 2018-December 2019, By Pradeep S. Mehta, Amol Kulkarni and Chetna Rathore

India's decision on opting out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement in the 3rd RCEP summit held in Bangkok, Thailand on November 04 has grabbed the attention of the globe. With a total population of about 3.5bn and a total GDP of more than US\$21tn, the trading bloc accounts for more than 30 percent of the global trade. India decided not to join RCEP because the agreement did not address its concerns in a satisfactory manner. Some of its outstanding issues include but not limited to: inadequate protection against import surges; huge bilateral trade deficits; and exclusion of service agenda. Further, discouraging experience with Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with RCEP nations in the past; and domestic capacity and competitiveness related constraints forced India to take a step back.

While opinions in favour of India's protectionist policies have emerged, it is also being criticised with the prospect of hurting consumers and industry over the long run. Backing out from RCEP will cause significant geopolitical ramifications. Not joining RCEP will likely result in missing out on an opportunity of integrating with the regional and global value chains. Moreover, concerns regarding widening trade deficit appear overblown in light of evidence that growth in imports being a factor of growth in import of intermediate products, thereby aiding domestic industries in enhancing exports.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/onw-1-rcep.pdf>