Going from one extreme to the other: food security and export restrictions in the EU-CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement.

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Between 2007 and 2008 the price of several basic food products spiked suddenly leaving millions of people without economic access to sufficient food. Since the crisis there has been wide agreement that the external trade policies of several major exporters of food played a key role in exacerbating the effects of the food crisis on vulnerable countries. In fact, when the crisis commenced and food prices of key staples started rising, several major exporters implemented export restrictions on certain food products such as wheat, rice and cereals, diminishing further the quantity of food available on the international market and aggravating the price spike. The food crisis also manifested the incapacity of international trade law to prevent large exporters from using export restrictions in a way that undermines food security. Several recent trade agreements between the European Union and countries particularly vulnerable to food shortages include innovative clauses on export restrictions that are more restrictive than multilateral trade law. This article presents one of these clauses that is contained in the Economic Partnership Agreement between the European Union and Caribbean Countries, a group of countries that is vulnerable to food shortages but with no influence on global food prices. The article shows that the new regulation is too restrictive and isolated to be considered a positive step towards the improvement of global food security. In fact, the treaty creates at least three new challenges to food security that will have to be dealt with through domestic and international policy making.

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