**Competition in the Food Sector**

**TRANSFOP Presentations at the OECD**

Continuing concern about competition issues in the food sector and the factors that determine retail food prices was highlighted at meetings of OECD Member States over two days of discussion at the OECD in Paris in late October with the involvement of Jo Swinnen and Steve McCorriston. There were two related events. The first event focussed on Competition across the Food Chain and coordinated by the OECD Trade and Agriculture Directorate. Jo Swinnen highlighted issues about vertical coordination in global food chains and how aspects of competition and the hold-up problem can determine the extent of pass-through; in this context, he highlighted the role of institutions and how the efficiency of vertical chains and extent of pass-through may also be ‘context-specific’.

Steve McCorriston gave an overview of TRANSFOP research at the same event focussing on the factors that determine food inflation and the usefulness of scanner data in determining the functioning of the food retail sector. One interesting feature of this session was that it was shared with the US Department of Agriculture who focussed on inflation issues in the US, underlying that the concerns with the food sector are not EU-specific.

More specific concerns with competition in the food sector were addressed in a special Competition Roundtable organised by the Competition Directorate of the OECD. The Competition Roundtable involves representatives from the anti-trust authorities of OECD Member States and, underlying the interest and concerns about the food sector, the Competition Roundtable attracted more than 30 submissions from OECD countries detailing how they deal with competition in the food sector and the overall functioning of the food supply chain. Steve McCorriston had written the OECD background paper for this event (this is available as TRANSFOP working paper, number 11 (<http://www.transfop.eu/papers/>) and Jo Swinnen provided some wrap up comments at the end of the event putting into perspective why concerns about the food sector are increasingly important, both economically and politically. Details of the Competition Roundtable event will be available on the OECD Competition website.

Steve McCorriston

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