

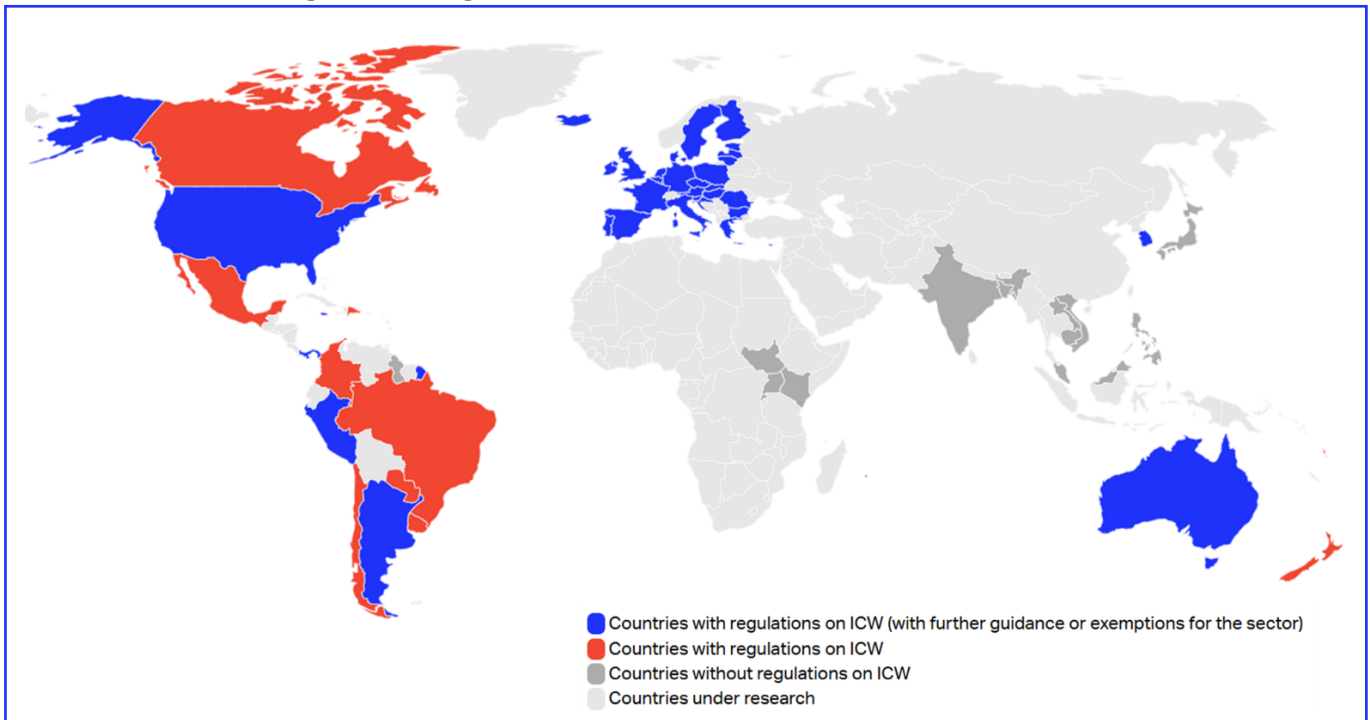


Chart of the Week

28 February 2025

ICW regulations prevent efficient waste management

International catering waste regulations across the world



Source: IATA Sustainability and Economics, 2024

Note: This map simplifies borderlines for better data visibility, which does not imply IATA's endorsement of territorial claims or borderlines.

- A number of countries have introduced legislation on handling and disposing of catering waste from international flights to protect their agricultural sectors, particularly concerning animal health. While these regulations are designed to prevent the spread of animal diseases, they also prevent airlines from segregating, recovering, and recycling waste.
- International catering waste (ICW) is often classified as biohazardous, requiring incineration, sterilization, or deep landfill burial. The specialized handling and disposal requirements imposed by these legislations and the resulting inspection charges place a significant financial burden on the sector.
- There is no evidence that regulatory impact assessments, including airline industry consultations, were undertaken before the implementation of ICW legislation. Given the sector's robust food hygiene controls that ensure airline meals are safe for human consumption, this biohazardous classification seems disproportionate. Moreover, the current animal health regulations do not address the most significant risk, the illegal meat imports concealed in passengers' baggage.
- In 2024, IATA commissioned a [study](#) to understand the risks of airline catering waste on animal health. The study concluded that ICW from air transport does not represent a significant risk to human, animal, or plant health and does not need specialized handling, treatment, and disposal.
- The adoption of smarter ICW regulations will result in less cabin waste, more material recovery, financial benefits, and improved customer satisfaction while supporting policymakers in maintaining high animal health status.

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