
Theme III: WTO, Economic Growth and Environmental Sustainability

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We are aware of the fact that inclusion of environmental sustainability linked trade and growth in WTO framework has added an important dimension in trade by rules to provide level playing field for the objectives of attaining green economic growth with equity. It has added new conditions and widened the terms of basic agreements on agriculture related to market access, domestic support and export subsidies along with SPS and SFM measures and provision of amber, blue and green boxes, through numerous deliberations in various ministerial rounds and special committees' meetings. In fulfilling these obligations of the WTO as a founder signatory of this agreement, Indian agriculture has to respond to protect its environmental resources while taking care of socio-economic sustainability in terms of livelihoods options, catering the food security for its population.

In this backdrop the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics (ISAE) has provided a common platform through its 85th Annual Conference to discuss the theme "WTO, Economic Growth, and Environmental Sustainability: Navigating Intersection". The ISAE accepted 27 papers including invited keynote address. Eight full papers and 18 summaries were published, covering structural challenges before the global south, varied issues of socio-economic and environmental sustainability, and agricultural trade governance and policy obligations, WTO negotiation agenda relating to multilateral issues of domestic subsidies, export restrictions, transitions from export subsidies to facilitation, with regional variations and implications for multilateral and bilateral international trade and growth in horizontally and vertically diversified agriculture, i.e., food grains, i.e., cereals and pulses, commercial crops, such as cotton, horticulture, vegetables, onions, spices, saffron, dairy and fishery produces and products traded with globally and regionally, particularly with SAARC countries. Out of 27 papers 13 papers including keynote address were presented and discussed. Besides summary of papers and questions raised in rapporteurs report published in the conference volume, following issues emerged out of presentations and discussions:

- It was discussed that the real challenges of sustainability in agriculture in India and their implications on food security is to achieve the outcome of environmental sustainability along with domestic socio-economic concerns.

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- Implications of setting high standards of environmental sustainability by developed countries have created export barriers and affected India's food production system. The country should take initiatives to update the policies to protect the interests of its farmers particularly landless, marginal and small holdings for their livelihoods and food security and their transition from low value to high value produce.
- The deliberations underlined the real challenges of export restrictions, tariff and non-tariff barriers and export rejections in accessing untapped markets, that the small operators of dairy produce and products have been facing.
- It was discussed that India has to initiate steps to improve its competitiveness in comparison to global multilateral trade in SAFTA region.
- The concerns were raised about the indifference at the WTO in protecting the interest of developing countries like India and the least developed countries towards effective implementations of trade by rules. It was also underlined that India should focus on Carbon Terms of Trade, while negotiating on environmental sustainability.
- There were discussions that India should carefully participate with proper homework about the environmental issues and their implications on multilateral trade while investing its scarce resources in such initiatives towards targeted outcomes which have affects, on bilateral trade as well.

The following policy recommendations emerge from the discussions:

- There is need of an updated climate-smart agriculture promotion policy to reduce environmental impact of export-oriented crops through DSR in rice and drip irrigation for horticulture while using renewable energy in value chains.
- The development of green logistics systems should focus on building sustainable cold chain infrastructure and transportation networks which could use solar-powered storage facilities and increase rail-based transportation instead of road-based transportation.
- Appropriate policy measures should be initiated to realize untapped potential in target markets by improving quality and reducing rejection in dairy sectors.
- An initiative for the inclusion of environmental cooperation through trade agreements should be pursued by India to obtain clean agriculture technology and sustainability standards research support.

- A comprehensive policy framework is required for sustained cooperation, building SAFTA innovation hub and logistic support among SAFTA countries.
- The trade policies need to support smallholder and marginal farmer participation through cooperative structures, Farmer Producer Organizations and fair contract farming practices.
- Small-scale fishing operations should be protected through an appropriate policy framework while working to establish sustainable global rules.
- India should strike a balance with social and economic sustainability, while negotiating environmental sustainability conditions of multilateral trade for market access at WTO forum and improve its competitiveness to access international markets.

Future Research Agenda

- Most of the papers dealt with trade competitiveness with statistical rigors and modellings but only a few have worked on intersectional navigations, which needs to be undertaken for further research.
- Theoretical rigor to link empirical findings may contribute to theoretical advancements and wider acceptability.
- In view of negotiations at WTO with industrially advanced countries on environment sustainability, serious exercise is required to analyze Carbon Terms of Trade between developed and developing countries.
- In order to analyze competitiveness, a comprehensive study is required to be undertaken on Price Relatives, Nominal Protection Coefficients, Effective Protection Coefficients and Effective Subsidy Coefficients with regard to Indian agricultural produce for international trade.