

Multilateral Negotiations on Agriculture and Possible Effects on Women in Developing Countries

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May 2004

**Division on International Trade in
Goods and Services, and Commodities**

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I Introduction

An increasing number of multilateral and regional trade negotiations and agreements aim at liberalising the international trading system, and with this releasing efficiency gains. On the other hand, sensitive agricultural products are often excluded in bilateral agreements and an increasing use of non-tariff trade barriers can be observed. Agriculture is also among the most controversial issues at the current WTO negotiations.

The outcome of the negotiations will have a strong impact on developing countries and on various groups within these countries, including especially women who are often over represented in the agriculture production. Both, their ability to generate income as well as their spending capacity will be affected. It is therefore important to analyse the potential impacts. Central questions are whether trade liberalisation accentuates or erodes existing gender inequalities and whether trade liberalisation leads to increased welfare in absolute terms. Furthermore, it is important to assess whether gender inequalities influence responses to trade policy changes.

II Negotiations on Agriculture

Multilateral trade negotiations

In section 2 ?? REF it was shown that developing and especially least-developed countries have a high dependency on agriculture in terms of employment, value added and export revenue. Since many developing countries belong to the most efficient producers of agricultural products they see a high potential to increase their production and export earnings. Another group with a strong interest in agriculture are net-food importing developing countries. In most developed countries the economic dependency is lesser, but for political and other reasons such as food safety agricultural trade too is considered to be very important. The WTO negotiations on agriculture are very controversial and many analysts and negotiators see them as the key for a successful completion of the Doha Round.

A further reason for the importance is that even after the implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture, which was a first step towards a more market oriented agricultural trading system, trade distortions remain significant. This is the case for all three pillars of agriculture for which the Agreement on Agriculture determines provisions and which are at the centre of the negotiations on agriculture in the Doha Round: market access, domestic support and export competition.

Market Access

Tariffs for agricultural products are many times over the rates for non-agricultural products (Table 4). Developed countries have an average bound tariff rate of 51 per cent. Bound tariffs are country and product specific maximum tariffs that can be applied on imports. The actually applied tariff rate is 48 per cent. Middle income countries have higher bound rates but with 25 per cent on average smaller applied rates. Least-developed countries have the highest bound rates but applied rates are with 39 per cent considerably smaller than the bound rates. The high tariffs in agriculture compare with much lower tariff rates for non-agricultural products, where applied rates are only 3 and 13 per cent.

Table 4: Bound and applied tariff rates for agriculture and non-agriculture products

		Bound	Applied
Agriculture	High-income countries	51	48
	Middle-income countries	60	25
	Low-income countries	78	39
Non-Agriculture	High-income countries	4	3
	Low & Middle-income countries	20	13

Note: Simple average of out-of quota ad valorem equivalents. Source: UNCTAD TRAINS and WTO.

The average tariffs, however, do not show the problem of tariff peaks and tariff escalation. On some products there are very high tariffs and tariffs tend to increase by degree of processing. This makes it difficult for developing countries to enter into exports of processed products with a higher value added. Tables 5 and 6 give an

example of tariff escalation for cotton products for the US market and some EU agricultural products. Supper (2000) shows that in spite of progress in trade liberalisation resulting from the Uruguay Round peak tariffs and significant tariff escalation persists.

Table 5: US market access for least-developed countries for cotton products

Production Process		"Best" applied rates for various partner categories			
Code	Description	African LDCs (AGOA)	Asian LDCs	Haiti	GSP Benef.
01	Raw cotton	0.33	0.33	0	0.33
02	Carding or combing	4.77	4.77	0	4.77
03	Spinning of cotton thread and yarn	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33
04	Knitting or crocheting	14.35	14.35	14.35	14.35
05	Making up knitted or crocheted articles	11.03	11.03	9.56	10.59

Note: For preferential access under AGOA and GSP see below. Source: UNCTAD TRAINS

Table 6: EU MFN out-of-quota bound tariff rates

Product	Ad valorem equivalent tariff rate in %
Live bovine animals	61
Bovine meat	138
Tabacco leaves	14
Cigars	38
Cacao beans	0
Cacao powder	8

Source: UNCTAD, calculations based on AMAD

Other problems concerning market access are sanitary and phytosanitary regulations, standards and administrative rules. The WTO Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures and on Technical Barriers to trade deal with the problem of ensuring country specific technical regulations, product standards and safe food while at the same time ensuring that this is not used as an excuse for protecting domestic producers. One example is the dispute about genetically modified organisms in food exports. The agreements are especially important for developing countries as it becomes more and more important not only to produce a sufficient quantity but also to produce the appropriate quality. In 1997, for example, a number of developed countries imposed restrictions on fish imports from some African countries because they were considered to have inadequate hygiene standards. Meanwhile, many developing countries consider these non-tariff measures to be more important than market access difficulties caused by tariffs.

Least-developed countries and some developing countries benefit from preferential access to some developed country markets (see below). Although imports under the various preference schemes are not very high for reasons such as supply side constraints, rules of origin or sanitary and phytosanitary standards; further reductions of bound tariffs, mainly supported by highly competitive agricultural exporting developed and developing countries, would induce preference erosions. This is a major concern of countries strongly benefiting from the preferences. The supply side constraints and the often poor development level of institutions and infrastructure add

specifically to the difficulties in developing countries to produce enough high quality food for export markets. Furthermore, concerns about the possible negative effects of trade liberalisation on the availability of basic foodstuff in least-developed and net-food importing developing countries have been raised frequently. The link is that trade liberalisation leads, everything else being equal, to increasing food prices.

Domestic Support

Countries' commitments to cap and reduce domestic support are often considered to be the most innovative element of the Uruguay Round. Negotiators established an "Amber box" for domestic policies that distort trade and a "Green box" for minimally trade-distorting policies, which are exempt from reduction commitments. In 1998 Amber box support provided by all countries, which have reduction commitments, was about US\$ 76 bill.² It declined from about US\$ 120 bill. in 1995. About 97 per cent of this is provided by OECD countries and the EU, Japan and the US account for almost 90 per cent of the total. However, other support measures than the Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS) in the Amber box exist. According to the OECD the total support to agriculture in OECD countries amounted to US\$ 318 billion or 1.2 per cent of GDP in 2002 (OECD 2003). This includes transfers from consumers and taxpayers as well as support to general services to the agricultural sector. Major products that account for the bulk of support are milk, meats, grains and sugar (World Bank: 2003). Developing countries as a group also support their agricultural producers but to a lesser extent. They have some more flexibility since the Agreement on agriculture provides special provisions for developing countries.

The type of support is shifting more and more from trade distorting Amber box measures to reduction exempted measures, particularly to decoupled income support. This Green box support is in the WTO considered to be non or only minimal trade-distorting although there is no definition of non-trade distorting support. Support that is not linked to the current production is less trade distorting than production-linked payments. The problem, however, is that despite the effort by developed countries to decouple the payments it has been argued that all measures that encourage production of non-competitive producers through decoupled income support or income safety nets are de facto production and trade distorting. More research is needed to understand to which degree decoupled support distorts production and trade. The economic effect of production-encouraging support is that it distorts the production and is therefore inefficient and reduces world food prices.

A further problem concerning domestic support is an imbalance in the rules under the current Agreement on Agriculture because developed countries with monetary resources are allowed to continue to provide farm support within their Total Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS) commitments, while developing countries with budgetary constraints or different policies during the Uruguay Round base period have de facto zero AMS levels. In fact, 97 per cent of the final AMS commitment levels in 2000 accrue to OECD countries.

² Not all countries yet notified data for 1999 and 2000. Since the main Amber box support providing countries did notify their values for 1999 it is clear that the order of magnitude remains the same as in 1998.

Export Competition

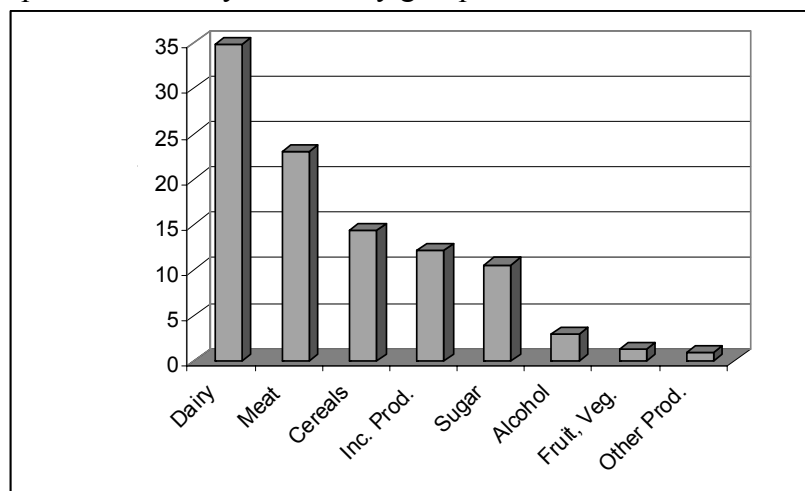
Export competition comprises especially the issue of export subsidies. Other issues are export credits, state trading enterprises, export taxes and food aid.

Export subsidies significantly distort agricultural trade. Currently only 25 WTO members are allowed to use export subsidies and have reduction commitments.³ The level of provided export subsidies depends on harvests, world food prices and exchange rates and is therefore fluctuating. Between 1995 and 2000 on average US\$ 6.2 billion of export subsidies were provided worldwide. The European Union provides almost 90 of these subsidies. However, the latest available data from the marketing years 2000/01 and 2001/02 show that the use of export subsidies in the European Union declined by more than 50 per cent compared to the 1995 – 2000 average.

Allowed export subsidies are certain special and differential treatment subsidies in developing countries like marketing costs and internal transport and freight charges. Also exempt from reductions are export subsidies related to international food aid and subsidy components in export credits.

Export subsidies provide exporters receiving the subsidies with a direct price advantage and the use of export subsidies is concentrated on a limited number of countries, mainly developed countries. The provision of export subsidies is counter-cyclical to the world price movement. In general export subsidies lead to declining food prices. This hurts vulnerable producers in developing countries. However, most of the export subsidies are on temperate products like dairy and cereals. Therefore, consumers in net-food-importing developing countries benefit from the lower food prices.

Figure 2: Export subsidies by commodity groups.



Source: UNCTAD calculation based on WTO notifications, averages 1995 – 2000 in per cent.

Providing export credits can be another form of trade-distorting export promotion. If, for example the interest rate is below the normal market rate or the length of time exceeds what the market would offer, the export credit may have a trade diverting

³ Some exceptions for developing countries exist. Least-developed countries have no restrictions.

effect since the decision of an importer may be made due to the financial appeal of the export credit. The overall trade distorting effect of export credits in total trade of agriculture products is small although certain export credit programmes do bias targeted importers' purchasing decisions and do distort markets. Furthermore, the OECD found that OECD importers received more than 50 per cent of the export subsidies. The low shares of export credits which are given to net-food-importing or less developing countries calls the justification for export credits into question that these assist countries facing liquidity constraints to purchase food where they otherwise could not.

Special and differential treatment and negotiation positions

Due to a lower level of development, developing countries are supposed to have less strict obligations when it comes to liberalise the agricultural trading system, longer implementation periods and its connected domestic policies. At the ministerial meeting in Doha WTO member acknowledged the special needs of developing countries. "Special and Differential Treatment for developing countries shall be an integral part of all elements of the negotiations" (Doha Ministerial Declaration, Article 13). Thus, the trade distorting measures and special and differential treatment were the main contents of the subsequent negotiations on agriculture. A large number of divergent proposals, including many from developing countries and country groups, mirror the different positions and interests. The two main dimensions in which positions differ are the level of ambition and the degree of special and differential treatment.

Major agricultural exporters, including many developing countries, demand an ambitious trade liberalisation round with substantial cuts in tariffs and domestic support and an elimination of export subsidies. A group of countries, mainly developed countries, which highly protect their markets, favour a less ambitious round. Net-food importing developing countries are on the one hand concerned about rising world food prices as a result of liberalisation and on the other hand hope to significantly increase their own production and become less dependent on imports. Least developed and developing countries highly benefiting from preferential access are concerned about preference erosion once most-favoured nation tariffs are reduced and therefore less keen on an ambitious round. Thus, developing countries are not a homogeneous group but have different needs.

The majority of developing countries demand a high degree of special and differential treatment in the form of significant improvements of market access to developed country markets while leaving an opportunity to protect their own vulnerable and sensitive markets in order to ensure rural development and food security. Measures that have been proposed for this purpose are Special Products (SP) and a special agricultural safeguard measure for developing countries (SSM). Under the Special Product provisions, a limited number of sensitive products would be exempt from reduction commitments or commitments would be lower, so as to enable developing countries to take account of their food security, rural development and livelihood security concerns.

Depending on the agreed rules, the concepts of SP and SSM could well be an instrument by governments to protect female farmers. In the negotiations on agriculture and the proposals that have been made gender is not a specific issue. However, if countries want to promote gender equality the relationship between vulnerability of women and specific agricultural sectors may be taken into account when formulating domestic development policies and international negotiation strategies.

Regional and bilateral trade agreements

The proliferation, expansion and deepening of bilateral and regional trade agreements (RTAs) has been one of the most significant developments since the creation of the World Trade Organization in 1995. In 2000, RTAs altogether accounted for some 40 percent of world trade and are estimated to cover over 50 percent in 2005. Developing countries have been actively involved in this process. Regional free trade agreements generally seek to go beyond WTO rules and disciplines in some respects. Almost all WTO members are also members of regional trade agreements with lower tariffs. In addition to reciprocal regional trade agreements, least-developed countries and some developing countries benefit from preferential access to some developed country markets. Prominent examples for preferential access are the GSP system, the ACP-EU agreement (Cotonou Agreement), the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the Everything But Arms (EBA) initiative by the European Union that gives least-developed countries preferential access for almost all products. Market access to the EU for the sensitive products sugar, rice and bananas is not duty and quota free for least-developed countries but access is gradually improved for these products.

Among the regional trade agreements are the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Free Trade Area (AFTA), and the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Recently, the US launched or concluded bilateral negotiations with developing countries such as Morocco, Panama, Colombia and Dominican Republic. The EU launched bilateral trade negotiations with the Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) group of states towards WTO-compliant 'Economic Partnership Agreements' or EPAs.

Some analysts of bilateral trade agreements between developed and developing countries see an imbalance in the bargaining power since the corresponding developed country is often a very important trading partner, which causes some dependency. Furthermore, agricultural products or at least the more sensitive ones are often not treated like industrial products. Fewer agricultural products are covered and tariff reductions are frequently smaller. Subsidies for agricultural products by developed countries are in general not covered at all. For example, difficulties between Brazil and America, co-chairs of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations, have resulted in a scaled down version of the agreement that allows countries to opt out of certain contentious areas like agriculture subsidies. The US has always refused to negotiate agriculture subsidies outside of the WTO. The result is a two-tiered framework, with all participating countries agreeing to tariff reductions on foreign imports, and some countries opting out of negotiations on areas such as agriculture

liberalization (Harvard University, 2004) Similar problems arise in the EPA negotiations. If the EU's relatively high tariffs on agricultural products had to be completely dismantled in these regional free-trade arrangements, not only would a major diversion in trade occur, but the sustainability of EU's Common Agriculture Policy would be severely undermined (Tangemann, 1999).

III Agricultural Trade Liberalisation and Gender

A *Potential Benefits from Liberalising the Agricultural Trading System*

Market distortions in the agriculture sector are high and thus, global efficiency gains from liberalisation would be high. Estimates of the contribution of agriculture and food to global welfare gains from completely removing trade barriers globally vary greatly but could be as high as US\$ 165 billion annually (Anderson 2003). Developing countries would receive about one quarter of these gains. Their gains would be considerably smaller if they would not reduce their own import tariffs in a proper sequence and strategic way.

Anderson (2003) is very optimistic concerning the benefits from agricultural trade liberalisation to developing countries and its impact on the poor. The price increase that would follow liberalisation would directly improve the vast majority of the poor because they are farm households and net-food sellers. Food security would be enhanced since their purchasing power would be strengthened and therefore poverty would be alleviated. The removal of agricultural subsidies would level the competitive field for developing countries and lowering tariffs and non-tariff barriers in developed countries would provide new export opportunities including for women.⁸

However, other economists are sceptical and are more concerned about difficulties such as supply side constraints, adjustment costs, net-food importing developing country food bills, development levels of institutions or preference erosion.

Distribution and transfer effects are important. They depend on several factors. On a country level and concerning the groups of producers, consumers and governments the following facts impact the gains or losses of trade liberalising (Vanzetti and Peters, 2003).

- Removing or reducing import tariffs, domestic support or export subsidies lead to increasing world market prices for agricultural goods. Price increases for most goods are modest, 1 or 2 per cent⁹. Prices for temperate products such as dairy products, meat and sugar increase much more than the prices for tropical products such as tea, coffee and cocoa since most of the protection and support is on temperate products.
- Producers in a country gain the most if others but the host country liberalise. Producers initially protected by high tariffs and support measures tend to lose.
- Consumers gain a lot in countries that remove high border measures. Consumers in countries in which no liberalisation occurs lose from higher world prices.

⁶ However, in reality compensation during implementation periods does not always take place.

⁷ See contribution by M. Hayashi on textiles in this book.

⁸ Anderson does not discuss gender specific effects.

⁹ The price changes vary from model to model and depend on the specific scenario. The pattern, however, remains more or less the same.

- Net-food exporting countries gain in general. However, it depends on the type of imports and exports since relative price changes are not equal.
- Net-food importing countries often lose. However, it again depends on the trade structure and the supply capacity.
- Producers in developing countries would benefit from special and differential treatment, which means lower reduction commitments for developing than for developed countries. The producers would gain market access without increased competition on its domestic markets. Special and differential treatment would, however, have adverse effects on consumers in developing countries that do not receive income from the agricultural sector.

The above stated results show that it clearly has to be distinguished between liberalisation in developing and developed countries, which is the main part of the special and differential treatment discussion. The interaction of the factors may produce in each individual country different outcomes, including a loss or a more limited increase in welfare for women or some specific group in the population where the presence of women is particularly large, such as subsistence farmers. Therefore, the impact of trade liberalisation on women in agriculture is unlikely to be uniform.

B Lessons learned from Case studies and Simulations of Trade Policy Changes

Trade liberalisation and structural adjustment programmes usually favour agricultural exports over the production of food crops. Women, who's engagement in food crop production and on smallholders is disproportionately high and who face difficulties concerning property rights on land and accessibility to credits and other resources are often disadvantaged to taking up new export opportunities. Although the availability of gender specific data concerning the impact of trade liberalisation is extremely sparse, most of the case studies in section .. REF give the impression that women in agriculture-based economies do not specifically benefit from agricultural trade liberalisation.

However, as shown above, it has to be distinguished between liberalisation in developed and in developing countries. Most of the available case studies analyse liberalisation in developing countries themselves, i.e. structural adjustment programmes. In this case, the benefits have largely accrued to medium and larger farmers in sectors where often only few farmers and employees are female. Thus, the question is whether and if so to what extent developing countries should be given special and differential treatment provisions in a new agreement on agriculture in order to have enough policy space to overcome the difficulties concerning smallholders and subsistence farmers who are often crucial for food security. A too ambitious and fast liberalisation of developing country markets for domestically produced food crops, would increase import competition with adverse effects – at least in the short term - for the corresponding farmers.

Farmers in developing countries, male or female, would, however, gain from improved access to other markets. But due to the limited access to relevant resources

¹⁰ For a case study on Ghana see REF FAO paper and Fontana et al. (1998), pp.15-18.

that seem to hinder women to take advantage of new export opportunities, gains may not always be equally distributed. However, the case study on Uganda shows that there are examples where women benefit more than men from an increased involvement in non-traditional agricultural exports and increased household incomes.¹¹

Furthermore, smallholders have in general greater constraints to comply and overcome hygiene and environmental standards. With decreasing tariffs these standards such as sanitary and phytosanitary provisions become more and more important. Therefore, these non-tariff barriers to trade should be addressed in the negotiations on agriculture. In addition, women may disproportionately benefit from reducing tariff escalation and tariff peaks in developed countries. Women's participation in agro-processing is often very high. For example, the share of female workers in the Philippines in the food-processing sector is with 46 per cent higher than in the whole economy (39 per cent) and 53 per cent of India's food preservers and canners are female (ILO, Labour Statistics Database). Developing economies as a whole would gain from diversification into higher process stages in agricultural production.

Thus, liberalising developing countries' agricultural markets may disproportionately negatively affect women who are engaged in food crop production. However, the situation of female consumers, often responsible for family nutrition, has to be taken into account as well. Furthermore, it is likely that female farmers benefit from reducing tariffs and specifically non-tariff barriers in developed countries but since men are often disproportionately engaged in the production of export crops existing gender gaps may not be reduced without further specific measures. The impact on women will not be uniform. The particular problems of farmers in countries benefiting from preferential access clearly have to be addressed and forms of compensation have to be found. This can be for example technical assistance to overcome supply side constraints and to diversify, financial compensation or other measures.

C Gender inequalities and responses to trade policy changes

Gender based inequalities in control over resources do not only influence the ability of women to benefit from trade liberalisation but also impacts on a country's capability to respond to trade policy changes. Whereas in export oriented semi-industrialised countries wage gaps stimulated investment and growth the situation seems to be different in many agricultural predominated economies. Cagatay (2001) reports that gender inequalities hinder a successful export performance in agricultural economies where smallholder producers are predominant. The World Bank (2002) has found that greater gender equality and a less rigid or extreme gender-based division of labour promote growth.

Thus, if agricultural predominated countries want to benefit from agricultural trade liberalisation and increase agricultural production and productivity in order to be

¹¹ Fontana et al. warn that there may be social costs involved. See also REF FAO paper.

competitive prevailing conditions such as access to credits and fertilizers for women should be improved.

IV Conclusions

It is generally accepted that trade liberalisation by other countries or the country concerned has different impacts on different economies and on different groups within economies. Trade liberalisation expands some activities and contracts others. Gains and costs to groups depend to a large extent on where their economic activities are based. Since women's representation in agricultural sectors and in activities within sectors differs from that of men, and women receive in general lower wages and experience a gender bias in the control and allocation of resources within households, women and men are differently affected by trade liberalisation. Three questions emerge. First, how both groups are affected in absolute terms, second, how they are affected in relative terms, i.e. whether gender gaps increase or decrease, and third, the influence of existing inequalities on trade performance. Related questions are how national policies and international agencies such as transnational corporations impact the effects.

Evidence exists that export-orientation in developing countries leads to an increasing share of women in paid employment. Although conditions seem to be bad they are often better than the alternatives. There is not a general tendency concerning changes of wage gaps. The female employment increase seems more common in the manufacturing sector and in semi-industrialized economies. In the predominantly agricultural economies, however, trade liberalisation may not unconditionally contribute to a reduction of existing gender gaps. Women's engagement in food crop production and subsistence farming is disproportionately high and they have lesser control over resources and land. Agricultural trade liberalisation tends to advantage larger producers and the production of export crops. Since women seem to have higher constraints to accessing credits and new technologies they are disadvantaged in taking new opportunities. Furthermore, women are often smallholders.

To the extent that a country reaps gains from liberalisation and the situation for many women in rural areas is obviously difficult, it would be important to find ways to "make it work for women" rather than reject any liberalisation of trade per se.

Data and research on the impact of agriculture trade liberalisation on women and gender inequalities is still sparse and thus, conclusions have to be made with caution. However, building on the evidence available so far, some conclusions can be drawn. First, a potential benefit for rural women seems not only to be available inside the agriculture sector but to a large extent in other sectors. Prevailing conditions that enhance women's mobility between sectors such as training and education should have a high priority in development policies.

Second, benefits for women inside the agriculture sector may be increased if their access to resources would be improved, e.g. through micro-credits and specific training for women. Furthermore, institutional changes such as marketing organisations can contribute to improve trickle down effects. This would be beneficial not only for women but the entire economy. Eliminating tariff escalation in developed countries would provide new employment opportunities for women in the agro-processing industry. Often, vertical diversification is not only gender positive and intensive but also the value added is higher at a higher degree of processing.

Third, providing new alternatives for rural women such as employment opportunities in the service sector or export industries and improving the supply capacity of women should take place before domestic competition in the production of food crops increases through opening developing countries own markets. This pleads for special and differential treatment of developing countries in the current round of negotiations. Special Products and a special agricultural safeguard mechanism have been proposed by developing countries and should be implemented to protect vulnerable female farmers in developing countries during a sufficiently long transition period.

National policies and international support can contribute to utilise agricultural trade liberalisation to increase developing countries' welfare and, the topic of this article, to reduce existing gender gaps. At a national level, preconditions to take advantage of new supply and export opportunities should be adjusted. For example property rights for land should be defined clearly, effort should be made to provide equal opportunities for education and maternal and child care that does not disadvantage the employment of women could be improved in rural areas and in agro-processing industries.¹² This could also be supported by international organisations. Other measures at the international level such as eliminating tariff escalation and reducing non-tariff barriers were mentioned above. Technical assistance at the international level such as targeted training could increase the productivity of women, which may then contribute to altering their position within families and societies in developing countries.

¹² A case study of Tanzania showed that reducing women's time burden in a community of smallholders would increase significantly household income and labour and capital productivity (Tibajuka, 1994).

V Literature

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