

Chapter 18

Integrative Associations and Food Security: Case of China–Russia Interregional Cooperation

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents the analysis of agricultural regulations in the frames of the World Trade Organization (WTO) along with an overview of control measures in the sphere of food security in bilateral and multilateral trade unions. The main attention is given to the associations in the Asia-Pacific Region (APR). The chapter concludes with an overview of interregional cooperation between Russia and China in the sphere of agriculture and analysis of its impact on food security of the region. Recommendations for improving and establishing food security are made and future research directions are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that trade in agricultural products has rather modest share in the world's global trade, agriculture has been one of the most difficult and controversial areas to negotiate trade agreements. Most of the countries implement high tariffs, as well as non-tariff barriers to protect domestic markets from agricultural imports and in such a way ensure food security. The term “food security” was first introduced in 1974 at the Rome Conference on Food Security held by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the

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United Nations (FAO) after a sharp rise in world prices for grain. In 1996, the definition of food security was included to the Rome Declaration on World Food Security: food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 1996).

In the academic community, however, the understanding of food security has not been unified. Some scholars define food security as a state of food resources in which food needs are met mainly by domestic production in amounts sufficient for normal life of the population (Uskova, 2014). The authors consider this definition as more appropriate. This is proved by strict tariff and non-tariff policy of many countries aimed at supporting the competitiveness of domestic agricultural producers. According to international standards, when a share of imports in domestic consumption of agricultural products exceeds 35-40%, a country is not secured against the interruptions in supply of foreign food products or volatilities in food prices in the global market (Sukhomirov, 2012).

The measures undertaken by governments to support domestic agriculture have a huge impact on food security. Participation in various integration and trade unions may limit sovereign rights to apply agricultural regulatory measures, as well as tariff and non-tariff policies. The advantages of trade liberalization include increased availability of food and its diversity through lower prices, increased incomes of food-producing countries, establishment of stable and uninterrupted supply of food products, technological progress in agriculture through the exchange of technology and diffusion of innovation effect (Martin & Laborde Debucquet, 2018). Negative factors include increased risk of purchasing low-quality products and adverse impact on public health, as well as environmental problems, including the expansion of land use, fertilizers, and energy (Martin & Laborde Debucquet, 2018). Increase in food prices in export-oriented countries due to increased demand for products may also have a negative effect on food security in food-importing states. Liberalization may also bring an increase in food import and a decrease in the competitiveness of national agricultural producers (with possible withdrawal from the market in «non-agricultural» countries), as well as limiting national policies in the regulation of agriculture.

BACKGROUND

Globally, food security studies are conducted by the FAO, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and The Economist Intelligence Unit. These organizations collect data on agricultural production and trade, calculate indexes of food security for different countries, describe the situation in this sphere in different regions, and develop measures to address emerging food insecurity problems.

Along with this, IFPRI scholars study the impact of free trade, protectionism, and integration processes on food security across the continents and countries (Martin & Laborde Debucquet, 2018; Wang, 2015; Qi et al., 2017; Grishkova & Poluhin, 2014; Uskova, 2014). So far, however, few studies have actually paid enough attention to the impact of specific measures implemented within various integration and trade unions on food security in member countries. In particular, food insecurity problem has been poorly addressed in China-Russia interregional trade and economic cooperation.

In this chapter, the authors conducted an analysis of agricultural trade regulations within the World Trade Organization (WTO) and made an overview of food security control measures in bilateral and multilateral trade unions, specifically, in Asia Pacific Region (APR). The chapter is concluded by an

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