

Joint Statement: Leveraging opportunities for better-informed and more sustainable agricultural trade policies through the use of systemic methods

We, MATS, Trade4SD and IISD, are committed to working towards a more sustainable and equitable food system and recognize the vital role of agri-food trade in global food security and economic growth. However, we acknowledge the potential trade-offs existing between trade practices and the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainable development.

Therefore, we call for a strengthened approach to agri-food trade analysis that integrates sustainability considerations and contributes to a more holistic, evidence-based impact assessment of trade policies. This will ensure that trade contributes to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and fosters a resilient and inclusive food system.

To enhance the available tools for agricultural trade policy analysis, we

acknowledge that sustainability of agricultural trade is intimately tied to the sustainability of domestic production, including social dimensions such as labor standards and salary; and environmental dimensions such as water availability, soil erosion, and greenhouse gas emissions;

highlight that agricultural trade policy analysis should be based on an integrated modelling approach that combines local evidence-based information and modeling techniques, accounting for the interconnectedness between local impacts and policy making in different levels of trade governance;

urge that trade policies undergo rigorous ex-ante and ex-post sustainability impact assessment (SIAs) that consider context-specific economic, environmental, and social impacts by applying economic valuation of sustainability related externalities;

call for a holistic approach in integrating trade and environmental policies with other supporting instruments such as project support, training, and guidelines to ensure that both environmental protection and international trade objectives are mutually reinforcing; and

underline that while environmental benefits are critical, costs that fall on low-income countries and threaten human rights, including the right to food and nutrition, are unacceptable, and therefore demand stronger consideration of socio-economic implications of trade policies.

By applying new techniques and insights to agricultural trade policy analysis, and beyond, we can more realistically assess the impact of trade policies on sustainable development, and hence, contribute to a more just and sustainable future for all.