



# **Integrated Assessment of the Impact of Trade Liberalization**

*A Country Study on the Colombian Rice Sector*





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# Foreword

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A trade liberalization movement to encourage economies with competitive advantages to produce tradable goods characterized the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Least Developed Countries (LDCs) adopted this neo-liberal model, making it easier to trade goods, reducing tariffs and unifying aids and commercial restrictions in subsidies. The illusion of these new paradigms was mainly to increase the share of LDCs in agricultural trade.

Yet, in the last years of the twentieth century almost all of the LDCs registered an economic recession with high unemployment rates, income concentration, and lower growth rates. According to the World Bank<sup>1</sup>, food imports have grown spectacularly in these countries while developed countries have increased their exports of agricultural products and employment in agricultural activities.

The main interest of international institutions in monitoring welfare and development indicators is to evaluate the sustainability of the development model induced by trade liberalization between countries. One way to understand the impact of trade liberalization in the economies of the LDCs is to study agricultural commodities.

This study is an integrated assessment of the impacts of trade liberalization on Colombia's rice sector. Rice was chosen because it is a semi-annual crop, a basic food for low-income populations, and an employment generator in rural zones. Rice sector trends were evaluated over the last 13 years to measure the direct and indirect impacts of trade liberalization. It was found that the sector's performance was linked to international markets despite domestic protections. Exposition of the sector to new trade policies has generated negative social, economic and environmental impacts. As a complement, a mathematical model was calculated to evaluate input and output productivity in the sector.

The conclusion of this study is that, despite reductions in real costs and producer prices, the Colombian rice sector is more vulnerable each year to international markets because of distortions arising from aids and subsidies in major rice-exporting – and thus price-forming – countries.

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<sup>1</sup> See Balcázar Alvaro *et al.*, 2003.



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# United Nations Environment Programme

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The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the overall coordinating environmental organization of the United Nations system. Its mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnerships in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and people to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. In accordance with its mandate, UNEP works to observe, monitor and assess the state of the global environment, improve the scientific understanding of how environmental change occurs, and in turn, how such change can be managed by action-oriented national policies and international agreements. UNEP's capacity building work thus centres on helping countries strengthen environmental management in diverse areas that include freshwater and land resource management, the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, marine and coastal ecosystem management, and cleaner industrial production and eco-efficiency, among many others.

UNEP, which is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, marked its first 30 years of service in 2002. During this time, in partnership with a global array of collaborating organizations, UNEP has achieved major advances in the development of international environmental policy and law, environmental monitoring and assessment, and the understanding of the science of global change. This work also supports the successful development and implementation of the world's major environmental conventions. In parallel, UNEP administers several multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) including the Vienna Convention's Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (SBC), the Convention on Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (Rotterdam Convention, PIC) and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

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