



TRADE PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS: SELECTED ISSUES RELEVANT FOR ASIAN DEVELOPING ECONOMIES

A study by the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade

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Trade performance and competitiveness: Selected issues relevant for Asian developing economies



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Foreword

This volume comprises four selected research essays on different aspects of trade and industry issues in the Asian region.¹ They are written by researchers in Asian countries, brought together by the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) which from April 2011 until September 2013 has implemented its Phase III under the topic of “Drivers of Competitiveness and Strategies for Economic Diversification for Developing Countries – Building Policy Making Capacity in Asia and the Pacific”. The latest phase of ARTNeT reflects the diversity and breadth of research interests, as well as the depth of research talent, available in the region and harnesses these assets in addressing the major development policy issues facing developing Asian countries. Since its establishment ARTNeT has focused the efforts of the network on ensuring that research institutions of the Asia-Pacific region, particularly those in least developed countries, provide more relevant and higher-quality applied research and policy recommendations to policymakers. ARTNeT and its members and associates have endeavored to produce high quality and relevant studies on trade issues on the basis of a demand-driven research programme, to improve the communication and dissemination of research study results of research institutions to policymakers; and to increase the capacity of research institutions in the region, especially in the least developed countries. All of this has been done with the aim of making trade and investment related research more useful and accessible to policymakers who are thus better informed and able to design and prepare for implementation of coherent trade and investment related policies for inclusive development.

With the success of the previous phases ARTNeT has evolved to be one of the leading networks of researchers, analysts and policymakers in the region. Its acceptance as an active and unique network seems fully justified when viewed from its membership which is cohesive, professionally credible and mutually supportive. The growth and extensive outputs of the network in itself speaks volumes about the relevance of the network and the demand for its quality outputs. The interest in the capacity building and training conducted by ARTNeT has grown at a similar pace and it testifies to the strong need for organizations like ARTNeT to continue addressing gaps in capacity within the Asia-Pacific.

The studies in this volume and other research produced under the ARTNeT Phase III Research programme (available through ARTNeT’s website) are produced with the aim of addressing these explicit and implicit demands of the Asia-Pacific countries and to fill in the gaps in capacity and knowledge. The studies are of significance and interest to researchers and policy analysts alongside policymakers. This is primarily because they look at previously unexplored issues using new and innovative analytical and methodological approaches, which can be drawn on to conduct similar studies in the region. We hope that these will stimulate further work on these important issues.

¹ The volume carries only several of the studies that were conducted under this programme phase reflecting the efforts towards reducing the volume of printed publications and a gradual shift to online release only. The other studies undertaken under this phase are available in electronic copies.

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The authors of the studies and the ARTNeT secretariat received invaluable research guidance, constructive comments and suggestions from advisor to this project Professor Sisira Jayasuriya, Monash University, Australia, and other experts whom the authors have acknowledged for specific studies. The project was coordinated by Dr. Mia Mikic, Chief, Trade Policy and Analysis Section, ESCAP under the general guidance of Dr. Ravi Ratnayake, Director, Trade and Investment Division, ESCAP. The authors have also had the opportunity to discuss their methodology and preliminary findings during the ARTNeT conference on “Empirical and policy issues of integration in Asia and the Pacific” on 1 to 2 November 2012 held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in which the discussants, Mr. Denis Hew, Mr. Jason Lao, Mr. Sarath Rajapatirana, Dr. Nagesh Kumar and other participants provided very useful comments and suggestions. Notwithstanding this, any remaining errors and omissions in this publication should be attributed to the authors only and not to the advisors and benevolent commentators. There are many other people that needed to be thanked, without implicating them in the views expressed in this volume, for assisting through the process, since the design of ARTNeT Phase III until preparation of these selected studies for the publication. These include Ms. Melanie Ramjoue who contributed to the formulation of the Phase III programme and Mr. Adam Heal who has coordinated the preparation of the book for print. The studies in the book were edited by Ms. Nicole Colmar and other research under the programme by Mr. Robert Oliver both of whom should be thanked for more uniform style of the material presented but should not be blamed for the content remaining. Ms. Panjai Limchupong, Ms. Tavitra Ruyaphorn and Ms. Chaveemon Sukpaibool have all contributed in different but important ways towards the fruition of the project. Mr. Teemu Alexander Puutio has provided technical support to the ARTNeT Secretariat and also, with Yisi Chen, the idea for the cover page of the book. The International Development Research Centre’s support since the establishment of ARTNeT and during this phase is gratefully acknowledged. This support proved to have been the factor that made an important difference in the effectiveness of research capacity-building in the trade and trade-related areas under ARTNeT since 2004. This, combined with a significant substantive contribution from the ESCAP secretariat as well as a technical support in the implementation of the projects, have been instrumental in the growing presence of ARTNeT in the region.

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