



STUDIES IN TRADE AND INVESTMENT
61

FUTURE TRADE RESEARCH AREAS THAT MATTER TO DEVELOPING COUNTRY POLICYMAKERS

**A regional perspective on the Doha
Development Agenda and beyond**



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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Preface

This volume is a collection of papers and commentaries presented at the Post-Doha Research Agenda for Developing Countries Workshop in October 2006. The workshop was organized collaboratively by ESCAP and WTO as one of the first activities under the new project, the Macao Regional Knowledge Hub in Support of Sustainable Trade and Development (MARKHUB) sponsored by the government of Macao, China.

MARKHUB was established as part of the ESCAP response to demands by stakeholders in the region for more locally generated knowledge in the area of trade and trade policy. The project is underpinned by two types of activities:

- (a) Capacity-building in research, delivery of research outputs and their dissemination through a newly established Macao Working Paper Series (MARKePAPERS), in collaboration with WTO and other institutions participating in the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT), a joint initiative of ESCAP and IDRC, Canada.
- (b) Capacity-building in the area of trade policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation through the convening of regional policy consultations and workshops.

The workshop was held during the period of formal suspension of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) negotiations. The objective of the workshop was to identify important areas for trade policymaking in developing and least developed countries, independently of the actual outcome of the Doha Round. This does not reflect any pessimism or skepticism about the continuation of the DDA negotiations on the part of the organizers and participants. On the contrary, the workshop stressed that the conclusion of the Doha Round was the single most important element in making trade fully development-friendly for the countries of the region. Thus, the topics of the workshop focused on current and upcoming research questions on trade policy reforms, including services trade, non-tariff barriers, competition and behind-the-border measures, preferential trade and trade impacts on poverty.

Several months after the workshop was held, DDA negotiations were restarted, but their outcome remains uncertain. What is certain, however, is that trade remains the driving force behind growth and development in Asia and the Pacific, and that policymakers must continue doing their job regardless of the global environment in which they find themselves. In an environment where trading rules might become less stable and predictable without the DDA conclusion, policymakers will have to depend even more on high-quality inputs from analysts and researchers. In these circumstances, homegrown research becomes as important as the ability to draw from the experiences of, and lessons learnt by other countries. Therefore, the establishment of MARKHUB is particularly timely as it provides a specific forum for the exchange of research findings and stakeholders' opinions on good practices in sustainable trade and development policies.



The following chapters offer some new ideas for addressing current problems faced by policymakers. Concern is also raised regarding some areas that might become problematic, such as preferential rules of origin, non-tariff barriers and behind-the border barriers. This publication does not exhaust the number of areas of interest to policymakers or the public, nor is it intended to be a manual for good policymaking. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the following pages will provide some useful insights into ways of coping with the current and emerging trading environments.

Acknowledgments

This collection of papers and commentaries is the first publication resulting from the MARKHUB project generously sponsored by the government of Macao, China. The project also has benefited from the contribution of other dedicated partners: the World Trade Organization, Macao University of Science and Technology, and the International Development Research Centre, Canada.

The project is implemented by Ms. Mia Mikic, under the overall supervision of Mr. Xuan Zengpei, Director, Trade and Investment Division, and Ms. Tiziana Bonapace, Chief, Trade Policy Section of ESCAP. Mr. Robert Oliver edited this volume, while Ms. Tavitra Ruyaphorn had the task of formatting the text. Much advice and support was received from Mr. Patrick Low, Director, Research and Statistics Division of WTO for which the ESCAP secretariat expresses its appreciation.

The most profound gratitude is due to the authors who contributed papers and commentaries, and who patiently revised them in order to meet editorial consistency. Although much care was taken in removing obvious differences in the style and presentation of contributions, the volume was not edited with the aim of presenting the papers as a homogeneous manuscript. Therefore, the secretariat offers apologies to the readers who will find it necessary, when proceeding from chapter to chapter, to adapt to variations in expositions.

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