Trade in most agricultural commodities is expected to expand, trade rules are becoming more complex and some countries are using trade instruments in times of food crises to guarantee food supplies for their own people. Trade policy can have significant implications for food security, nutrition and employment. Given this, FAO will continue to support its Members in capacity development. This will be aimed at enhancing market transparency, exports and agricultural and food systems, via better aligned trade and agricultural policies. FAO also promotes sustainable production and trade by facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships in agricultural value chains. It supports the World Banana Forum (WBF), an example of a successful multi-stakeholder platform.

Trade and food security

Agri-food trade can help to balance food deficits and surpluses across countries and improve food availability and price stability. It can diversify diets across all seasons and help to generate incomes in agricultural sectors and rural areas. Yet greater trade openness to international markets may also pose challenges, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises. FAO supports its Members in better aligning trade openness and trade policy and ensuring positive food security outcomes.

Trade and sustainable development

The 2030 Agenda recognizes that trade is key to addressing food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture, and in reaching Zero Hunger in the context of climate change. Consumption and production patterns are evolving and global agri-food trade is projected to rise over the next decade, making trade a key component in most countries’ policy development strategies. In light of this, FAO plays a role in facilitating the policy processes that can help countries to support inclusive agricultural systems, job growth and poverty reduction.

Trade agreements

Trade agreements influence patterns of trade as well as the production and consumption of food. Ongoing World Trade Organization (WTO) agricultural negotiations and a rapid increase in bilateral, regional and mega-regional trade agreements have seen trade rules becoming more complex. In light of this multifaceted scenario, one of FAO’s main activities is assisting its Members in implementing trade agreements and in preparing for trade negotiations. It does this through studies, analysis, training and experience sharing.

Public-private partnerships for sustainable trade

The WBF connects participants from across the global banana supply chain to translate dialogue into action and promote best practices for sustainable production and trade. It comprises producers, traders, retailers, consumers groups, governments, research institutes and civil society organizations. Its three working groups address the most urgent challenges of environmental, economic and social sustainability. Collaboration is key as the WBF develops a Global Network to tackle Fusarium wilt TR4 disease.
E-learning courses
Trade, Food Security and Nutrition: supporting FAO Members in developing and implementing trade agreements, particularly under the WTO, by linking food security to trade policy and governance.

Agriculture in International Trade Agreements: informing policy makers on the main provisions of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AoA). It aims to support national efforts in delivering appropriate agricultural development and food security strategies.

Both online courses are free of charge as a global public good to all agriculture and food security professionals and other interested parties. Please note that registration is required.

Trade policy briefs
Overviews of the key trade policy questions addressed in recent FAO studies, aimed at broadening understanding of the issues, especially in the context of WTO negotiations on agriculture. Available in: English, French and Spanish

Trade and Food Standards
The publication describes how international food safety standards are set through the joint FAO and World Health Organization Food Standards Programme – the Codex Alimentarius Commission – and how these standards are applied in the context of the World Trade Organization Agreements on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and on Technical Barriers to Trade.

Available in: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish and Russian

Monthly newsletter | Overview of Trade Policy in the Countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia
A newsletter featuring agricultural trade policy changes in the region. It provides current trade measures, agreements, statistics and articles by experts covering trade-related issues in their respective countries, and it is sent to members of the Agricultural Trade Expert Network*.

Available in: Russian

*The network connects experts from across Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, as part of the Regional Initiative on Agrifood Trade and Market Integration, who research, train and advise governments and the private sector on agricultural trade issues in the region, including participation in multilateral and regional trade agreements.

Good practices for sustainable banana production
- The online portal of the World Banana Forum shares and encourages the adoption of good practices. It constitutes a learning platform to build local capacity and is open to all, including small producers.

Available in: English, French and Spanish

- The World Banana Forum has produced two manuals – for trainers and for workers – that help to improve the safety and health of workers on banana farms.

Available in: English, French and Spanish

- A practical guide to reducing carbon and water footprints in banana plantations, produced under the WBF umbrella. Includes experiences from Costa Rica – the leading country in GHG-emission reduction in the banana industry – and aims to share and replicate lessons learned worldwide.

Available in: English and Spanish

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