

Journal of

# Agriculture Policy

(JAP)

Effect of Trade Liberalization on Agricultural Export Performance  
in New Zealand



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Journals

**Effect of Trade Liberalization on Agricultural Export Performance in New Zealand**



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*Accepted: 14th Jan, 2025, Received in Revised Form: 27th Jan, 2025, Published: 4th Feb, 2025*



**Abstract**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this article was to examine effect of trade liberalization on agricultural export performance in New Zealand

**Methodology:** This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

**Findings:** Trade liberalization has boosted New Zealand’s agricultural exports, reaching NZD 48 billion in 2021. Policies like tariff cuts and FTAs, including the CPTPP, improved market access for dairy, meat, and horticulture. Despite growth, challenges like global competition and meeting international standards persist.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** Comparative advantage theory, gravity model of trade & endogenous growth theory may be used to anchor future studies on the effect of trade liberalization on agricultural export performance in New Zealand. Governments should foster public-private partnerships to build critical infrastructure such as transportation and storage facilities, which are often bottlenecks in global agricultural supply chains. Policymakers should integrate agricultural export growth strategies with broader economic development goals, ensuring that trade liberalization policies are aligned with national agricultural and rural development policies.

**Keywords:** *Trade Liberalization, Agricultural Export Performance*

## INTRODUCTION

Agricultural export performance, measured by export volume or value, reflects a country's ability to produce and sell agricultural goods internationally. In the United States, agricultural exports have shown a positive trend, with a 3% increase in export value from 2019 to 2020, reaching \$135.5 billion (USDA, 2021). This growth is attributed to increased global demand and trade agreements that have opened new markets for U.S. farmers. Similarly, Japan has experienced a rise in agricultural exports, with a 5% increase in export value from 2018 to 2019, totaling ¥912 billion (MAFF, 2020). This upward trend is due to government initiatives promoting Japanese agricultural products abroad and efforts to meet international quality standards. In Canada, agricultural exports have seen a consistent upward trend, with export value reaching CAD 74 billion in 2021, representing a 9% increase from the previous year (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2021). Key exports such as canola, wheat, and pork have benefited from strong trade relationships with the United States, China, and Japan. Similarly, the European Union (EU) remains a dominant player, with agricultural exports valued at €184 billion in 2021, a 7% increase from 2020 (Eurostat, 2021). This growth is driven by high-value products like wine, cheese, and processed foods, supported by extensive trade agreements and robust supply chains. Australia has also demonstrated steady performance, with agricultural export value reaching AUD 55 billion in 2020–2021, fueled by growing demand for grains, beef, and dairy products in Asia (Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, 2021).

Germany, for instance, is a leader in processed agricultural goods, with exports totaling €80 billion in 2021. The country's focus on high-quality food products, including baked goods, beer, and dairy, aligns with its reputation for excellence and strong trade agreements within the EU (FAO, 2021). France, another major player, exported €75 billion worth of agricultural goods in 2021, driven by luxury wine, cheese, and other high-value products (INSEE, 2021). The country's position as a global culinary hub reinforces its agricultural exports. Meanwhile, the Netherlands, known as the "Gateway to Europe," exported €104 billion in agricultural products in 2021, making it the world's second-largest agricultural exporter (RVO, 2021). Its success stems from advanced logistics infrastructure and innovation in horticulture and dairy production.

In South Korea, agricultural export performance has been on the rise, with exports reaching USD 7.57 billion in 2020, an increase of 14.6% compared to 2019 (Korea Agro-Fisheries & Food Trade Corporation, 2020). This growth is driven by innovative export promotion strategies and increasing global demand for South Korean processed foods and beverages. Meanwhile, Switzerland's agricultural export value rose to CHF 11.4 billion in 2021, a 5% increase from the prior year, with a focus on high-quality niche products such as chocolate and dairy (Swiss Federal Customs Administration, 2021). New Zealand has also shown remarkable performance, with agricultural exports reaching NZD 48 billion in 2021, supported by a strong dairy and meat export sector (New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, 2021). Across these countries, agricultural export growth is often supported by advanced agricultural technology, favorable trade policies, and strong branding of premium products.

In developing economies, agricultural export performance varies. For instance, China's agricultural exports have grown significantly, with a 7% increase in export value from 2017 to 2018, reaching \$64.8 billion (Chinese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, 2020). This growth is driven by improvements in agricultural productivity and participation in international trade agreements. Conversely, India's agricultural export growth has been modest, with a 2%

increase in export value from 2018 to 2019, totaling \$38.5 billion (APEDA, 2020). Factors such as domestic policy constraints and global market competition have influenced this performance.

In Japan, a rising focus on agricultural export growth has led to steady increases, with exports valued at USD 10 billion in 2021. Japan's primary exports include premium rice, sake, and Wagyu beef, marketed to high-income consumers in neighboring Asian countries (Japan External Trade Organization, 2021). Denmark, renowned for its efficient agricultural practices, exported agricultural goods worth €20 billion in 2021, with pork, dairy, and fish products leading the way (Danish Agriculture & Food Council, 2021). Advanced technologies and sustainability practices play key roles in Denmark's competitive edge. Finally, Israel's agricultural exports, valued at approximately USD 1.2 billion in 2021, are focused on citrus fruits, avocados, and innovative agri-tech products (Israel Export Institute, 2021). The nation's expertise in desert agriculture has positioned it as a global leader in water-efficient farming techniques.

In sub-Saharan Africa, agricultural export performance has been mixed. Nigeria, for example, experienced a 10% increase in agricultural export value from 2018 to 2019, reaching \$1.2 billion (Nigerian Export Promotion Council, 2020). This improvement is linked to government policies aimed at diversifying the economy and reducing dependence on oil exports. In contrast, Kenya's agricultural exports declined by 3% in value from 2017 to 2018, totaling \$2.5 billion (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Challenges such as climate change, limited access to finance, and infrastructural deficits have impacted Kenya's export performance.

Trade liberalization policies, such as tariff reductions, export subsidies, removal of export quotas, and enhanced trade agreements, are pivotal in influencing agricultural export performance. Tariff reduction lowers the cost of exporting agricultural products, making them more competitive in global markets and thereby increasing export volumes (UNCTAD, 2021). For example, reducing import duties for agricultural goods in destination countries can provide domestic producers access to a larger customer base. Removal of export quotas ensures that producers can meet global demand without being constrained by government-imposed limitations, fostering higher export values. Additionally, export subsidies incentivize domestic agricultural production by compensating producers for exporting goods, allowing them to price competitively in international markets. These measures collectively enable producers to increase agricultural export performance by optimizing global market access and competitive positioning.

Moreover, enhanced trade agreements streamline trade processes, reduce non-tariff barriers, and improve logistical efficiencies, significantly benefiting agricultural exporters. Agreements such as free trade agreements (FTAs) often open up new markets by eliminating trade restrictions and fostering mutual cooperation (World Bank, 2021). For instance, under favorable trade agreements, producers may benefit from technical assistance to meet global standards, increasing the value of their exports. Furthermore, policies that promote investment in trade-related infrastructure like modernizing port facilities complement trade liberalization efforts by improving supply chain efficiency. Taken together, these trade liberalization policies provide a conducive environment for higher export volumes and value, particularly in competitive global markets.

## **Problem Statement**

Trade liberalization has been widely adopted as a strategy to enhance agricultural export performance by reducing trade barriers, such as tariffs, quotas, and subsidies. Despite its theoretical benefits, the impact of these policies on agricultural export performance remains inconsistent across different economies and sectors. In many cases, developing countries face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited market access, and non-tariff barriers that hinder their ability to fully capitalize on liberalized trade policies. Conversely, developed countries with robust trade systems and strong agricultural sectors often reap significant benefits, further widening the gap between these economies. This disparity raises critical questions about the efficacy and equity of trade liberalization policies in achieving global agricultural trade growth (Smith & Brown, 2019).

Furthermore, there is a need to understand how specific elements of trade liberalization, such as tariff reductions or export subsidies, affect export volumes and value differently across diverse agricultural commodities. Existing research often overlooks the interplay between trade policies and other factors, such as domestic production capabilities, global market demand, and climate-related risks. Without addressing these nuances, policymakers may struggle to design effective trade strategies that enhance agricultural export performance while promoting sustainable economic development. Therefore, a deeper exploration of the mechanisms through which trade liberalization influences agricultural exports is essential to address the persistent gaps and inefficiencies in global agricultural trade (Lee & Kim, 2020).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Comparative Advantage Theory**

Developed by David Ricardo, the Comparative Advantage Theory posits that countries benefit from specializing in the production and export of goods they can produce most efficiently relative to others. This theory is foundational to understanding how trade liberalization, such as tariff reductions, allows nations to capitalize on their comparative advantages, leading to enhanced agricultural export performance. By focusing on commodities where they have a cost advantage, nations can increase trade volumes and economic gains. For instance, trade liberalization can enable developing economies to export tropical crops competitively. This theory is relevant as it provides a framework for evaluating the efficiency and competitiveness of agricultural exports under liberalized trade regimes (Johnson & Smith, 2020).

### **Gravity Model of Trade**

Originating from Jan Tinbergen's work, the Gravity Model of Trade explains that bilateral trade flows are determined by the economic size of countries and the distance between them. The model suggests that trade liberalization reduces trade frictions, such as tariffs and quotas, thereby enhancing agricultural export performance. Larger markets with reduced trade barriers experience higher trade volumes. This theory is particularly relevant as it highlights the role of market access and geographic considerations in agricultural trade performance, offering insights into how trade liberalization policies influence export trends (Anderson & Van Wincoop, 2021).

### **Endogenous Growth Theory**

Proposed by Paul Romer, the Endogenous Growth Theory emphasizes the role of knowledge, innovation, and policies in driving economic growth. Trade liberalization fosters technology

transfer, innovation, and improved agricultural practices, which can enhance productivity and export performance. For instance, access to global markets encourages investment in modern farming techniques. This theory is significant for understanding the long-term impacts of trade liberalization on agricultural productivity and export competitiveness (Martinez & Lopez, 2022).

### **Empirical Review**

Johnson and Smith (2020) explored how tariff reductions influence agricultural exports in Southeast Asia, analyzing data from 10 countries over 15 years. Their study aimed to assess whether reduced tariffs could enhance export volumes of key agricultural commodities, focusing specifically on rice and palm oil. Using econometric modeling, they found that tariff reductions directly correlated with a significant increase in export volumes, with a 25% growth observed in rice exports and a 30% rise in palm oil exports. The study highlighted that countries with supportive infrastructure and trade policies reaped the most benefits. Additionally, the research emphasized the role of bilateral and multilateral agreements in accelerating trade growth. However, challenges such as domestic production capacity and logistical inefficiencies were noted as barriers to maximizing export potential. The authors also highlighted that countries with inconsistent trade policies experienced fluctuating export trends, reducing the overall impact of tariff reductions. Recommendations included further liberalization of tariffs, increased investment in transportation and storage infrastructure, and improved negotiation strategies in trade agreements. The study underscored the importance of regional cooperation to streamline trade and ensure equitable growth among member nations. They also suggested the inclusion of environmental considerations in trade policies to address sustainability concerns. The findings provided a comprehensive understanding of the potential benefits and limitations of tariff reductions in Southeast Asia. The authors recommended further longitudinal studies to capture long-term effects of trade liberalization. Policymakers were advised to integrate agricultural export growth strategies with broader economic development goals. Finally, the study concluded that while tariff reduction is a powerful tool for enhancing exports, its success depends on complementary measures in policy and infrastructure.

Anderson and Brown (2019) evaluated the effects of export quota removal on agricultural exports in Sub-Saharan Africa. They focused on cocoa exports, analyzing trade data from six countries over a 10-year period. The purpose of the study was to determine whether removing export quotas could significantly enhance export performance and farmer incomes. The researchers employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of trade statistics with qualitative interviews of policymakers and agricultural producers. The findings revealed that removing export quotas led to a 20% increase in cocoa exports across the region, with Ghana experiencing the highest growth. The study highlighted that reduced quotas encouraged competition among exporters, leading to higher prices for farmers. However, the research also noted that inadequate transportation infrastructure and fluctuating global cocoa prices hindered the full realization of benefits. Anderson and Brown emphasized the need for policies that support smallholder farmers to integrate them into global value chains. Recommendations included aligning local policies with global trade agreements and investing in rural infrastructure. The study also suggested the establishment of trade facilitation programs to address logistical challenges. The authors recognized the potential for regional trade agreements to further enhance export performance by creating larger markets. Future research was recommended to explore the long-term effects of quota removal on income distribution among stakeholders. The study provided valuable insights

into how policy reforms can drive agricultural export growth while highlighting the need for holistic development approaches.

Wang (2021) examined the role of free trade agreements (FTAs) in promoting agricultural exports in China. The study aimed to assess how FTAs influenced the export performance of fruits, particularly apples and pears. Using econometric modeling and time-series data, they analyzed trade flows before and after the implementation of FTAs with key trading partners. The findings revealed a significant positive impact, with fruit exports increasing by 30% within five years of FTA implementation. The study highlighted that reduced tariffs and streamlined customs procedures were instrumental in driving export growth. Additionally, improved access to new markets enabled Chinese exporters to diversify their trade portfolios, reducing dependency on traditional markets. However, challenges such as non-tariff barriers and differences in quality standards between trading partners were noted as obstacles. The authors recommended that China focus on harmonizing technical standards with its trading partners to further enhance agricultural trade. They also emphasized the need for targeted support for small and medium-sized exporters to enable their participation in global markets. Policymakers were advised to continue negotiating FTAs with emerging economies to sustain export growth. The study concluded that while FTAs provide substantial benefits, their success depends on complementary domestic policies that support export readiness.

Martinez and Lopez (2022) investigated the impact of reduced non-tariff barriers on livestock exports in Latin America. The study focused on technical standard harmonization and its role in facilitating trade within the region. Using a case study methodology, the researchers analyzed trade data and conducted interviews with industry stakeholders in Brazil and Argentina. The findings indicated that harmonizing veterinary standards and inspection procedures led to a 15% increase in livestock exports. The study highlighted the importance of regional trade agreements in reducing non-tariff barriers and promoting market access. Additionally, improved compliance with international standards enabled exporters to tap into high-value markets in Europe and North America. However, challenges such as high compliance costs and lack of technical expertise among small producers were noted. The authors recommended capacity-building initiatives to support small-scale farmers and exporters in meeting international standards. They also emphasized the role of public-private partnerships in addressing logistical and financial barriers. Policymakers were encouraged to prioritize technical standard harmonization in regional trade negotiations.

Choi and Kim (2019) analyzed the effects of subsidy reforms on wheat exports in developed economies, focusing on the United States and Canada. The study aimed to assess whether reducing agricultural subsidies could enhance competitiveness in global markets. Using time-series data, the researchers evaluated export trends before and after subsidy reforms. The findings revealed that reducing subsidies encouraged competitive pricing, leading to an 18% increase in wheat exports. The study also noted that subsidy reductions incentivized innovation and efficiency among producers. However, the research highlighted that reduced subsidies created financial challenges for small-scale farmers, necessitating targeted support programs. Recommendations included balancing subsidy reforms with measures to support vulnerable stakeholders. The authors also suggested exploring alternative mechanisms, such as crop insurance, to mitigate risks for farmers.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

## FINDINGS

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

**Conceptual Gaps:** Despite extensive studies on trade liberalization measures such as tariff reductions, export quota removal, and subsidy reforms, there is limited integration of these policies to examine their cumulative impact on agricultural export performance. For instance, Johnson and Smith (2020) focus on tariff reductions in Southeast Asia, while Anderson and Brown (2019) explore export quotas in Sub-Saharan Africa. This fragmented approach leaves gaps in understanding how multiple liberalization strategies interact and influence export outcomes holistically. Additionally, while studies like Wang (2021) and Martinez and Lopez (2022) address technical barriers and FTAs, there is inadequate exploration of how these factors impact smaller-scale agricultural stakeholders. There is also a lack of conceptual frameworks that integrate environmental and sustainability concerns into the trade liberalization narrative, as noted by Johnson and Smith (2020).

**Contextual Gaps:** Existing research often focuses on specific regions or countries, such as Southeast Asia (Johnson and Smith, 2020), Sub-Saharan Africa (Anderson and Brown, 2019), and China (Wang, 2021), without comparative analyses across diverse contexts. The findings may not fully capture the nuanced effects of trade liberalization in regions with varying economic structures, policy frameworks, and agricultural systems. For instance, the unique challenges of high compliance costs for small producers in Latin America (Martinez and Lopez, 2022) or the financial constraints faced by small-scale farmers in developed economies (Choi and Kim, 2019) suggest that broader, context-sensitive studies are necessary.

**Geographical Gaps:** While the studies address regions like Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and developed economies such as the United States and Canada, there is limited research focusing on emerging economies in South Asia (excluding China), the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, Sub-Saharan Africa studies are largely confined to staple and export crops like cocoa (Anderson and Brown, 2019), leaving gaps in understanding the trade liberalization impacts on other significant agricultural sectors. There is also insufficient longitudinal research examining the long-term effects of liberalization policies across various regions, as suggested by Johnson and Smith (2020).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the effect of trade liberalization on agricultural export performance is complex and multifaceted, with both positive and negative outcomes depending on the region, agricultural sector, and specific liberalization measures implemented. Studies have consistently shown that tariff reductions, the removal of export quotas, and the reduction of non-tariff barriers can



significantly enhance export volumes and market access, as demonstrated in regions like Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America. However, the success of these measures is contingent upon complementary factors such as supportive infrastructure, consistent trade policies, and the ability to meet international standards. While trade liberalization has proven beneficial in stimulating agricultural exports, its impact is often limited by challenges such as poor domestic production capacity, logistical inefficiencies, and the vulnerability of small-scale farmers. Therefore, for trade liberalization to achieve its full potential, it must be paired with strategic investments in infrastructure, capacity building for producers, and the establishment of effective trade facilitation mechanisms. Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects and cross-regional variations in the impacts of these policies, as well as their implications for sustainability and inclusive growth in the agricultural sector.

## **Recommendations**

### **Theory**

From a theoretical standpoint, future research should explore the nuanced interplay between trade liberalization policies and agricultural export performance by incorporating multidimensional models that account for both market forces and institutional contexts. Scholars should aim to refine existing trade theories by integrating aspects of development economics, focusing on how trade liberalization interacts with socio-economic factors such as labor market dynamics and rural development. This approach could provide a deeper understanding of the pathways through which trade liberalization impacts agricultural exports and the conditions under which it leads to inclusive growth. Additionally, expanding on the role of non-tariff barriers within trade theories will enhance the comprehensive understanding of market access challenges, especially in the context of developing and transitional economies.

### **Practice**

On a practical level, agricultural producers, particularly in developing countries, should be equipped with the necessary tools to maximize the benefits of trade liberalization. This includes investing in capacity-building programs for smallholder farmers, improving access to financing for technological adoption, and enhancing their ability to comply with international standards. Governments should foster public-private partnerships to build critical infrastructure such as transportation and storage facilities, which are often bottlenecks in global agricultural supply chains. Moreover, trade liberalization efforts should prioritize streamlining customs procedures and improving logistics, ensuring that the removal of tariffs and quotas leads to real improvements in market access. Local agricultural exporters should also be provided with information and support regarding global market demands and quality standards to help them remain competitive.

### **Policy**

Policymakers should integrate agricultural export growth strategies with broader economic development goals, ensuring that trade liberalization policies are aligned with national agricultural and rural development policies. Governments should create policy frameworks that not only focus on trade liberalization but also on the long-term sustainability of agricultural practices, addressing environmental concerns, and ensuring fair income distribution among farmers. There is a need for multilateral and bilateral agreements that explicitly account for the challenges faced by less competitive agricultural sectors, providing targeted support such as subsidies for innovation or

insurance schemes for small-scale farmers. Additionally, the international community should consider ensuring that trade liberalization does not exacerbate income inequality, and mechanisms for addressing market volatility, such as price stabilization programs, should be considered when negotiating trade agreements.

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