

QUALITY ASSESSMENT FORM

Title of the study:

**STUDY ON THE IMPACT ON EU AGRICULTURE AND AGRICULTURAL TRADE OF
EU CONCLUDED BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENTS**

DG/Unit: DG AGRI, Unit A.1

- Official(s) managing the study: Annette HURRELMANN

Contractor: Copenhagen Economics

Assessment carried out by:

Steering group with the active participation of units AGRI A.1, A.2, A.3, A.4, A.5, B.3, C.2, C.4, G.2, G.3 F.5, DG ENV, DG TRADE, SG, DG SANTE, DG MARE, JRC, DG TAXUD.

Date of the Quality Assessment: 26 January 2017

(1) RELEVANCE

Does the study respond to information needs, in particular as expressed in the terms of references?

SCORING

Poor

Satisfactory

Good

Very Good

Excellent

X

Arguments for scoring:

The study adequately responds to the information needs of the commissioning body and fully meets the requirements of the terms of reference. The themes are fully addressed. The requirements spelled out in the terms of reference with respect to the geographical coverage (at least three trade agreements selected according to specific criteria) and the product coverage (agricultural products as interpreted by DG AGRI) have been met.

In the study, the EU's trade agreements were analysed on the basis of three examples of different types of trade agreements: The trade agreements of the EU with Mexico ("first generation" trade agreement), South Korea (new generation Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreement DCFTA) and Switzerland (specific sectorial agreements). This allowed to assess the economic, social and environmental impacts of the agreements and to identify the main factors that have fostered and impeded the development of EU agri-food trade.

The study provides useful findings and recommendations for various purposes. First, it will be helpful in the communication to the public about the possible benefits – but also the possible difficulties – of trade agreements for the agricultural sector. Second, it will help to inform the Commission's understanding of the factors influencing the success of trade agreements that have to be considered when conducting trade negotiations.

(2) APPROPRIATE DESIGN

Is the design of the study adequate for obtaining the results needed to answer the study themes?

SCORING Poor Satisfactory Good Very Good Excellent
X

Arguments for scoring:

The methodological design of the study fully responds to the demands of the terms of reference and provides a state of the art analysis of the trade impacts of the selected trade agreements.

The study uses a triple-difference model that controls for a range of factors that influence bilateral trade between the trading partners, and which thus estimates the isolated impact of the agreements. An annex to the study provides a detailed account of the modelling approach. This analytical tool was supplemented by quantitative and qualitative information from five on-the-ground case studies (Danish pigmeat exports to South Korea, Polish sugar confectionary exports to South Korea, French wine exports to Mexico, EU citrus fruits imports from Mexico and German cheese exports to Switzerland).

This combination of modelling and case study approaches made it possible to make a quantitative assessment of impacts but also to get insights into the broader implications of the agreements on actors of the agri-food chain.

The study team was flexible to adapt the methodology where needed. The design applied was adjusted to the information needs of the commissioning body and the data availability. Some limitations in the analysis, such as the impossibility to break down the results to a detailed sector level, were inherent in the model specifications and have been balance to the extent possible by the combination of different methods.

(3) RELIABLE DATA

Are data collected adequate for their intended use and have their reliability been ascertained?

SCORING	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent
			X		

Arguments for scoring:

The study is based on existing data from trade databases as well as on information collected in the case studies. Data on global and bilateral trade before and after the trade agreements entered into force as well as data on the preferential access granted by the trade agreements was collected to inform the modelling work.

The data used from external databases was fully adequate for the study within the limitations inherent in the sources, e.g. with respect to the most recent data updates. Where necessary and possible, data from different sources was combined to be able to work on most recent information. The data available on environmental issues in the appropriate form to be used in the modelling work was limited, so that not all aspects of environmental effects of trade could be explored.

The information collected in the case studies corresponded to the needs of the study in all instances. However, the depth and detail of the data collected varied between the different case studies.

Overall, the contractor has made an effort to exploit all available data sources, and also has explored secondary sources such as academic articles, other study reports, etc. The data sources used are clearly identified in the report.

(4) SOUND ANALYSIS

Are data systematically analysed to answer study themes and cover other information needs in a valid manner?

SCORING	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent
					X

Arguments for scoring:

The available information was systematically analysed, making use of a combination of data sources (secondary sources from databases, own data collection) and methods (qualitative and quantitative, modelling and case studies) in order to fully explore the topic by supplementing different types of information.

The analysis allowed addressing all study themes in an appropriate manner and deriving sound conclusions and recommendations that respond to the information needs. The presentation of the different steps of the analysis and the combination of the different sources of information is clear and transparent.

(5) CREDIBLE FINDINGS

Do findings follow logically from and are justified by, the data/information analysis and interpretations based on pre-established criteria and rational?

SCORING	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent
					X

Arguments for scoring:

The findings are fully based on the results of the modelling exercise and the information from the case study research. The interpretation of the data is unbiased and cautious.

(6) VALID CONCLUSIONS

Are conclusions non-biased and fully based on findings?

SCORING	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent
				X	

Arguments for scoring:

The interpretation of the findings in order to come to conclusions and recommendations is logical and cautious, avoiding inappropriate generalisation and clearly pointing out the limits of the analysis where the findings do not allow drawing unambiguous conclusions.

The conclusions are mostly concentrated on the three agreements that were analysed but also provide some more general interpretations where this is warranted by the findings.

(7) HELPFUL RECOMMENDATIONS

Are areas needing improvements identified in coherence with the conclusions? Are the suggested options realistic and impartial?

SCORING	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent
				X	

Arguments for scoring:

The recommendations are coherent with the findings and clearly stemming from the conclusions of the analytical work. They are realistic and demonstrate an awareness of the political contexts and constraints that European trade policy operates in.

In line with the objectives of the study, which are focussed more on improving the understanding of trade agreements than on developing a strategy of action, the recommendations refrain from being overly narrow and prescriptive. Instead, they concentrate on identifying the areas where developing or intensifying EU activities could enhance the possibility for EU producers, traders and consumers to profit from trade agreements.

In some cases, the recommendations could benefit from making more explicit reference to the activities already implemented by the EU in current policy and practice.

(8) CLARITY

Is the report well structured, balanced and written in an understandable manner?

SCORING	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent
					X

Arguments for scoring:

The study report is very well-structured and logically constructed, which makes it easy to read and follow. The information is presented in a balanced way, providing the appropriate details to make it relevant and useful but avoiding an overload of information. Details on the technical aspects of the analysis are presented in a separate annex, which takes unnecessary technical complexity out of the main report. The figures and tables included in the report are well designed and appropriately selected to support the textual information.

Overall, the report is clear, well readable and well presented.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE FINAL REPORT

Overall, the quality of the report is assessed to be **very good**.

Is the overall quality of the report adequate, in particular:

- Does the study fulfil contractual conditions?

Clearly and fully.

- Are the findings and conclusions of the report reliable, and are there any specific limitations to their validity and completeness?

The findings and conclusions of the report are reliable and presented in a clear and transparent way. Where certain limitations exist, this is due to the intrinsic characteristics of the models and data sources used.

- Is the information in the report potentially useful for designing intervention, setting priorities, allocating resources or improving interventions?

The study provides important findings to improve the understanding of the impacts of trade agreements and the factors that support or undermine the success of these agreements. The conclusions and recommendations are a very useful contribution to the further discussion and reflection on improving the scope and design of trade agreements and the accompanying activities that may further help EU actors to make full use of them. The insights of the study also provide an opportunity for substantiating the EU's communication to the public on the impact and value of trade agreements for the agricultural sector.