



Reference Manual for the Integrated Assessment of Trade-Related Policies



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NOTE

The views and interpretation reflected in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect an expression of opinion on the part on the United Nations Environment Programme.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Manual is designed to help policy makers and practitioners—in the developed world and in developing countries—to conduct *integrated assessments* of the economic, environmental and social impacts of trade policy and trade liberalization. An *integrated assessment* considers the economic, environmental and social effects of trade measures, the linkages between these effects, and aims to build upon this analysis by identifying ways in which the negative consequences can be avoided or mitigated, and ways in which positive effects can be enhanced.

There is no single, all-encompassing approach to the *integrated assessment* of trade-related policy. Rather, in the preparation of this Manual, the theory and practice of conducting assessments have been reviewed and a variety of approaches are presented, along with supporting evidence. This Manual is designed to help and to encourage countries to design assessments that respond to the policy priorities and circumstances that are unique to each situation.

That international trade can have both positive and negative economic, environmental and social effects is well known. These effects vary across individuals, households, regions and ecosystems, across companies and across industries.

Trade can promote the efficient allocation of resources worldwide and therefore reduce the pressure caused by the over-exploitation of global natural resources. Trade can make people better off, through the expansion of production, employment, and consumption opportunities, which raises living standards and improves social indicators. Higher income levels can lead to higher investment in environmental management and protection.

Without appropriate environmental policies and regulations, trade liberalization can increase transport-related pollution, for example, by facilitating the movement of hazardous substances. Increased production and consumption may translate into greater waste emission and greater demand for natural resources—hastening environmental degradation and depletion.

A number of theories have been developed in the trade-environment literature to explore these relationships. Two of the most important are the Environment Kuznets Curve hypothesis and the Pollution Haven hypothesis.

The Environment Kuznets Curve asserts that in the process of economic development, a country pollutes more in the early stages, but that economic growth and greater wealth means that countries, in later stages of development, can invest in environmental improvement. The Pollution Haven hypothesis, on the other hand, contends that international trade agreements will cause pollution-intensive industries to migrate to countries where environmental standards are more relaxed—which is likely to be poorer, developing countries. Both theories contain elements of truth. Both continue to attract controversy.

The growing interest in the social impacts of trade liberalization suggests that in order to conduct a full assessment of the impact of trade policy on sustainable development, the trade-environment relationship must be extended to include social interdependence. It is this full range of relationships and impacts that an *integrated assessment* aims to investigate.

An *integrated assessment* serves a number of purposes: exploring the linkages between trade, the environment and development; informing policy makers across government departments and

international negotiators; developing policy packages to integrate policy objectives on trade, the environment and development; and increasing transparency in policy-making.

An assessment can be undertaken as part of negotiations within national governments deciding approaches to trade policy and liberalization. It can be undertaken before, along side, or following international trade negotiations, to investigate the environmental and social impacts of policies that may be, or have been, introduced. *Ex ante* assessments can help to plan the nature and timing of trade measures, and the introduction of complementary policies. *Ex post* assessments provide a retrospective examination of the environmental and social impacts of a trade policy, and can provide evidence of effects that can be mitigated or encouraged through the introduction of complementary policies designed to promote sustainable development. Both *ex ante* and *ex post* assessments can provide lessons and data for future assessments.

Central to a successful *integrated assessment* is the meaningful participation of stakeholders. This provides data, insights and information that is not available to the traditional economic policy analyst. There are a number of ways in which meaningful participation can be encouraged at various stages in the process. The benefits extend beyond simply enhancing the quality of the exercise to encouraging cooperation, building relationships, building capacity and enhancing support among stakeholders who might otherwise oppose the measures under consideration.

Given this broad remit, one challenge in conducting an *integrated assessment* lies in identifying what assessment methodologies are appropriate, what types of policy should be assessed, and what types of impacts should be measured. Also important is the issue of data constraints in the countries and sectors to be covered by the assessment. In some cases, a lack of data can make it difficult to identify impacts and assess specific policy options. Moreover, though some modelling techniques have been shown to perform well when applied to environmental assessment, their extension to measuring social well-being—central to an integrated assessment—has not been proven. It is often necessary, therefore, to include both qualitative and quantitative techniques as part of an assessment.

Other challenges include the lack of consensus on appropriate indicators for environmental and social variables, compared with those used routinely in economics. Furthermore, environmental and social data are scarce in some instances, and some variables are difficult to quantify. This has hampered theoretical and empirical efforts to integrate economics, environmental and social indicators into a systematic model incorporating all the varying effects.

There is an emerging consensus that one way forward is to adopt a range of approaches. In addition to formal modelling exercises on the one hand, or qualitative analysis on the other, this Manual presents a number of other approaches that can be used in an *integrated assessment*. These include such tools as benefit-cost analysis, risk assessment, multi-criteria analysis, extended domestic resource cost analysis, life cycle analysis, global commodity chain analysis and scenario building.

The aim of an *integrated assessment* is to influence policy-making. This Manual suggests that policy responses can take the form of the modification of trade agreements or policies, prior to implementation. Alternatively, policies can be adopted following the implementation of a trade agreement to mitigate any harmful impacts of trade liberalization on the environment or society and to promote positive effects. These policies can be implemented at the national, regional or global level. Such “flanking” policies promote the simultaneous pursuit of economic, environmental and social development goals.

An adjustment to a trade-related policy or agreement might include modifying the nature of a specific trade measure, such as a subsidy, or adjusting the timing of the implementation of the trade agreement so that complementary measures can be introduced. In other cases, where there

are positive impacts, an agreement might include provisions for accelerated tariff reduction on environmentally or socially beneficial products or inputs.

Where a trade agreement or a trade measure is expected to have significant environmental or social impacts there may be time, as a result of an *ex ante* assessment, to propose a parallel regime that will address environmental and social issues in conjunction with the implementation of trade liberalization. This can occur at the national level or, where the issues cannot properly be addressed domestically because of their cross-border or global character, at the regional or multilateral level.

“Flanking” policies can be developed and implemented by countries both before the introduction of a policy or following its introduction, and before an international negotiation or following its conclusion. The range of policy instruments includes: the implementation of market-based instruments targeted to address market distortions arising from environmental and social externalities; traditional command-and-control measures including legal reforms and regulations and standards; or the adoption of voluntary measures in the private sector, such as the promotion of environmental management systems or eco-labelling.

Finally, it is important to examine how the results of an *integrated assessment* translate into successfully implemented policies in practice, and the extent to which they meet their specified goals. *Integrated assessments* therefore need to include specific provisions for evaluation and monitoring. A follow-up process might also be warranted to track the long-term effects of economic activities, induced by trade measures and agreements, and so to identify where future *integrated assessments* might be needed.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development (UN)
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and Caribbean (UN)
FTAA	Free Trade Agreement of the Americas
JPAC	Joint Public Advisory Committee (NACEC)
MEA	multilateral environmental agreement
NACEC	North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
TPRM	Trade Policy Review Mechanism (WTO)
TRIMs	Trade-Related Investment Measures (WTO)
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (WTO)
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
USTR	United States Trade Representative
WTO	World Trade Organization

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