Assessment of Multilateral Rules and Food Security Concerns

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Food security is defined by Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) as a situation in which all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. This definition offers three implicit dimensions: availability, stability and access. Adequate food availability means that, on average, sufficient food supplies should be available to meet consumption needs. Stability refers to minimizing the probability that, in difficult years or seasons, food consumption might fall below consumption requirements. Access draws attention to the fact that, even with bountiful supplies, many people still go hungry because they are poor and unable to produce or purchase the food they need. In addition, if food needs are met through exploiting non-renewable natural resources or degrading the environment there is no guarantee of food security in the longer-term (Konandreas 2000).

In the last few decades concerns over food security have provided the rationale for agricultural and trade policies in both developed and developing countries. The rise in agricultural products prices in the period before the 2008-2010 global economic crisis and the perception that these prices would continue to rise in the future brought the issue of food security forward as one of the top priorities on the agendas of both countries and international institutions (Da Motta Veiga 2010). In fact in response to this period several multilateral initiatives to coordinate policy actions were launched. In 2008 the UN Secretary General created the High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis to ensure that the UN system, international financial institutions and the WTO were ready to provide robust and consistent support to countries struggling to cope with food insecurity. In 2009, the G-8, in a joint statement, committed to the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative, which recognizes that "Food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture must remain a priority issue on the political agenda, to be addressed through a cross-cutting and inclusive approach, involving all relevant stakeholders, at global, regional and national level" (HLTF 2010).

At the World Summit on Food Security in 2009 world leaders "agreed to work to reverse the decline in domestic and international funding for agriculture and promote new investment in the sector, to improve governance of global food issues in partnership with relevant stakeholders from the public and private sector, and to proactively face the challenges of climate change to food security" (HLTF 2010). More recently, in 2011 the G20 Summit led to important steps to reduce price volatility, including the creation of the Excessive Food Price Variability Early Warning system and the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) (Jackson and Kask 2012). This year's summit will continue discussions on this work in order to reach the goals of reduced volatility, poverty reduction, and global food security (Jackson and Kask 2012).

In addition at the level of international trade, food security is largely considered through the impact of multilateral trade agreements especially in the context of trade liberalization. Trade flows between countries, the incomes of producers of goods and services, as well as the purchasing power of consumers can all be altered by trade liberalization (Konandreas 2000). Some have even gone so far as to say that one reason developing country governments might resist trade liberalization - especially when it results in a deepening of their "dependence" on global markets for staple food needs – stems from anxiety about supply or demand volatility in those markets (variable supplies and prices of food, volatile demand for export crops) (Konandreas 2000).

It is the intention of this paper to explore food security issues in the context of multilateral trade obligations and particularly within the WTO Agreement on Agriculture in order to determine the limits and flexibilities within the Agreement which can inform CARICOM country governments pursuing food security policies.

Interplay of Trade and the Dimensions of Food Security[1]

Trade and availability of food

It has been long observed that many developing countries depend on the world market as a main source of supply. This is especially true for those countries where output is constrained by natural and other factors. From an economic perspective this in itself is no *a priori* reason for concern particularly if this is an economic choice that can be sustained. When countries import commodities it generally means it is cost more to produce them domestically than it does to produce them outside. It is on this premise that it makes more economic sense for some countries to implement a flexible policy of food self-reliance. That said while it is ideal for some countries to aim at substantial food self-sufficiency, generally it makes better economic sense to follow a more flexible policy of food self-reliance (Konandreas 2000). The success or sustainability of such a strategy, relies on two considerations:

[1] This section draws heavily on the assessment of P. Konandreas in the paper, *Trade and Food Security: Options for developing Countries.*

1. Import capacity:- that is the ability of developing countries to produce other goods and services and secure through trade the foreign exchange they need to import food.

   General observations show that developing countries have maintained or improved their capacity to finance food imports over the past few decades. For these countries their food imports have increased in absolute terms over the last few years; however the share of food import expenditures in total imports has remained relatively unchanged or has fallen substantially in some of them (Konandreas 2000). In South and Southeast Asia the share of food imports in total imports fell from 16 to 6 percent between 1970 and 1991; in Latin America from 11 to 10 percent; in West Asia from 14 to 12 percent; although in Africa it increased slightly from 14 to 15 percent (Konandreas 2000). Thus developing countries seemingly use less expenditure on food products out of their total expenditures on imports and by implication more on other goods and services.

2. The reliability of the world market as a source of affordable food supplies. It is important also to consider how these may be affected by trade liberalization.

   Countries reliant on food imports are vulnerable to supply uncertainty for reasons beyond its control, whether it be related to input shortages or food-exporting countries placing export restrictions or 'embargoes' for a variety of reasons. According to Article 12 of the AoA exporting countries expected due consideration to the food security interests of importing countries before they consider imposing any export restrictions. Provisions are also in place for advance notifications on export restrictions, none of which have ever been envoked. While it is taken that the risk of export restrictions is not fully eliminated by these provisions, the increased transparency that it fosters in the world market could help (Konandreas 2000).

Trade and stability (price) of food supplies

The second element of food security is supply stability, and trade also has an important role to play here. Trade allows consumption fluctuations to be reduced and relieves countries of part of the burden from costly stock holding interventions. The key consideration here is whether world market price variability would decrease or increase as a result of trade liberalization, and whether current domestic price variability is greater or less than future price instability (Konandreas 2000).

Contained in the AoA are a number of provisions that could be used by a country to protect itself from bearing the full brunt of market instability originating outside its borders. These include: the special safeguards clause of the AoA, i.e. the imposition of additional tariffs under certain conditions; varying the level of applied tariffs (what is termed as a "sliding scale of tariffs" within the ceiling bound level that a country has committed); and to a limited extent through maintaining food security stocks.

Trade and access to food

The third element of food security is access to food. International trade has a major bearing on access to food via its effect on economic growth, incomes and employment. While more open trade policies are generally assumed to contribute to economic growth over time, the main issue for food security is whether this economic growth reaches the poor (Konandreas 2000). If the benefits of trade-induced growth are highly concentrated among the better-off, then household food security may worsen for many, despite higher overall rates of economic growth.

Clearly, the food access situation differs from country to country and the linkages between trade, growth, employment and poverty are not clear-cut since each of these variables is influenced by other factors. The impact of trade on household food security is part of the wider issue of the impact of agricultural modernization and transformation on welfare and its distribution. Trade provides new opportunities for specialization and exchange, but the extent to which poor households can take advantage of them depends on their access to resources and the supportive role provided by the state. Where a problem exists, which limits the benefits of poor households from trade, it is more often a question of policy bias and institutional failure rather than due to trade per se (Konandreas 2000).

In conclusion on this issue, one can say that, provided domestic policies are in place to spread around the gains and/or to compensate the losers, then trade liberalization can play an important role in improving access to food.

The Emergence of Food Security as a Major Feature of the International Agenda[2]

[2] This section draws heavily from the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action(2010) by the High Level Task Force on the Global Security Crisis

Food Security in the multilateral context

The debate on food security essentially came to the forefront after the Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) came into force in 1995. This agreement raised issues of minimum market access commitments with obligatory import requirements, and food dumping. Those in favour of trade liberalization in agriculture argued it would ensure global food security by balancing the demand for and the supply of food items across the globe (Uzquizal 2009). Opponents on the other hand considered how it would negatively affect food autonomy at both local and national levels (Uzquizal 2009). It was soon realized that the other agreements of the Uruguay Round would also impact food security including the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), and the Agreement on Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMs).

Following this, the 2008-09 global food prices crisis revealed the deep vulnerability of the global food system (Uzquizal 2009). During this period, international food commodity prices rose to unprecedented levels in nominal terms, driving basic staples beyond the purchasing power of millions of poor people (FAO 2012). These high prices added to the strain already faced by poor households to afford food. Net food buyers were particularly vulnerable to these increased prices, and even staple crop farmers did not always realize gains from the increase in prices as a result of the ill-functioning markets (HLTF 2010). These high prices have since retracted from their mid-2008 highs; however they have not only remained elevated by recent historical standards, but are also quite volatile (HLTF 2010).

There was also the 2009 breakdown of the world financial system which impacted all countries and significantly diminished the capacity of developing country financial officials to react with measures which considered the best interests of their poorer populations. The magnitude and spread of this situation was such that it affected large parts of the world simultaneously. The ones most vulnerable were those that were financially and commercially dependent on the world economy. They experienced the effects of economic contraction, with an associated cut-back in export markets and a shortage of credit. Many countries experienced across-the-board drops in their trade and financial inflows, and saw falls in their export earnings, inward investment by foreign enterprises, receipts of development aid, remittances from citizens living abroad and income from taxes (HLTF 2010).

The international response to the crisis gave rise to what is thought to be the first attempted unified response by the UN agencies, funds and programs, Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO, with the establishment of the was embodied by the High Level Task Force (HLTF) set up by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon on 28 April 2008 (Jackson and Kask 2012). Then in 2009, the

G-8, in a joint statement, committed to the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative, which recognizes that "Food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture must remain a priority issue on the political agenda, to be addressed through a cross-cutting and inclusive approach, involving all relevant stakeholders, at global, regional and national level" (Jackson and Kask 2012). At the World Summit on Food Security in 2009 world leaders "agreed to work to reverse the decline in domestic and international funding for agriculture and promote new investment in the sector, to improve governance of global food issues in partnership with relevant stakeholders from the public and private sector, and to proactively face the challenges of climate change to food security" (Jackson and Kask 2012). More recently, in 2011 the G20 Summit led to important steps to reduce price volatility, including the creation of the Excessive Food Price Variability Early Warning system and the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) (Jackson and Kask 2012). Food security will also be a major feature of the Bali Ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) later this year as countries discuss the Indonesia, have schemes to support the overall food security issue (Vishwanath 2013).

Food Security Policy Options Under The WTO[3]

The year 1995 ushered in the new era of international trade in agriculture and food at the establishment of the WTO was established. This new era of trade saw all agricultural products brought under the multilateral trade rules by the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture (WTO 1999)[4]. The Agreement is made up of three 'pillars': market access, export competition and domestic support. All WTO members, except least developed countries (LDCs), were required to make commitments in all these areas in order to liberalise agricultural trade. As can be seen in the box below, developing countries were given a limited element of special and differential treatment (S&DT) (WTO 1999).[5]

[3] The section draws heavily on the WTO AoA found in the Legal Texts: The Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations 1999

[4] WTO (1999) 'Agreement on Agriculture', in *The Legal Texts: The Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

[5] Ibid

Box 1: Three Pillars of the WTO AoA

Market access *(articles 4 and 5 and annex 5).*

The most important commitments are:

• Developed and developing countries to convert all non-tariff barriers into simple tariffs (a process known as tariffication).

• All tariffs to be bound (i.e. cannot be increased above a certain limit).

• Developed countries to reduce import tariffs by 36% (across the board) over a six year period with a minimum 15% tariff reduction for any one product.

• Developing countries to reduce import tariffs by 24% (across the board) over a ten year period with a minimum 10% tariff reduction for any one product.

Export competition *(articles 8,9,10 and 11).* The commitments are:

• For developed countries, the value and volume of export subsidies to be reduced by 36% and 24% respectively from the base period 1986-1990 over a six year period.

• For developing countries, the value and volume of export subsidies to be reduced by 24% and 10% respectively from the base period 1986-1990 over a ten year period.

Domestic Support *(article 6 and annexes 2, 3 and 4).*

All forms of domestic support are subject to rules. The WTO classifies domestic subsidies into three categories known as the Amber, Blue and Green Boxes *(see Box 2)*. Only the Amber Box is subject to reduction commitments as follows:

• For developed countries, a 20% reduction in Total AMS (Amber Box) over six years commencing 1995 from a base period 1986-1988.

• For developing countries, a 13% reduction in Total AMS (Amber Box) over ten years commencing 1995 from a base period 1986-1988.

It is first important to note that while there are a few references to food security throughout the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AoA); this is not the central focus of the Agreement. For instance the Preamble makes particular mention of the issue to the extent that commitments under the reform programme for trade in agriculture should be made in an equitable way among all Members, having regard to non-trade concerns, including food security. Article 20 of the Agreement also mandates that negotiations for continuation of the reform process, should recognise that non-trade concerns, such as food security should be taken into account in the negotiations (WTO 1999). Apart from these sparse references to food security, the Agreement is quite clear in its objective i.e. to establish "a fair and market-oriented agricultural trading system" through "reductions in agricultural support and protection". The expectation is that this would result in "correcting and preventing restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets"[6].

Specific commitments made by countries under this agreement certainly have implications on the flexibility of members, particularly developing countries, in pursuing food security policies. Such flexibility (or the lack thereof) is addressed within the context of the three main areas of domestic policy intervention, namely production, consumption and market stability.

Production policy options

Within the Agreement there are generally two broad policy options for a country to support domestic production as part of food security strategy: *border measures*, i.e. tariffs within the tariff ceiling bound in the WTO; and *domestic support measures*, i.e. providing price and non-price support to farmers – also within the bounds of its WTO commitments.

Support through tariffs:- Relatively high bound rates in basic food items tend to characterize the tariff schedules of many developing countries. While this practice is compatible with WTO commitments, in practice it can have limitations especially for the developing countries, most of which are net-food importers. Higher tariffs imply not only higher prices to domestic producers but also higher prices paid by domestic consumers (Konandreas 2000). For many developing

[6] Indian Proposal on Food Security, *Negotiations on WTO Agreement on Agriculture* http://commerce.nic.in/wtomarket.htm

countries with large numbers of poor households – like several in the Caribbean this may not be a feasible option (Konandreas 2000).

Domestic support. There are a variety of options available to countries for the purpose of providing domestic support to agricultural producers. Production distorting policies are one such option which can be either product or non-product specific. *Product specific support* includes typically state procurement at guaranteed administered prices in excess of parity levels (Konandreas 2000). *Non-product specific support* typically includes subsidies for credit and inputs such as fertilizers, irrigation, seeds etc., which aim at reducing the cost of production but are not explicitly targeted to specific crops (Konandreas 2000). Both of these types of support are disciplined by the Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS)[7] and are available to countries that have claimed such support in their schedules for the base period. If they have not, then the upper limit for developing countries that applies to each of these two types of support is the 10 percent *de minimis* level (i.e. such support cannot exceed 10 percent of the farm-gate value of production) (Konandreas 2000).

Green Box policies are also available for countries to support domestic producers. These policies are considered to have no, or minimal, trade-distorting effects or effects on production. These include, *inter alia*: general services to agriculture such as research, pest and disease control, etc.; and direct payments to producers, such as de-coupled income support, income insurance and safety-net programmes, etc. Also included in the Green Box are food security stocks and domestic food aid programmes (Konandreas 2000). In addition, developing countries can also employ Special and Differential Treatment (SDT) policies, including generally available investment subsidies, agricultural input subsidies made available to low-income or resource poor producers, as well as support to producers to encourage diversification from the growing of illicit narcotic crops (Konandreas 2000).

Consumption policy options

The AoA generally allows for policies which are directed towards supporting consumers. The reason for this is that such support, although market distorting (it generally leads to higher overall food consumption than otherwise), is still trade-enhancing and thus does not impose on the export interests of trading partners (Konandreas 2000). Support for this particular policy option is found under the "domestic food aid" category of the Green Box which allows for food assistance when clearly-defined criteria related to nutritional objectives are submitted. Using this option developing countries are able to provide foodstuffs at subsidized prices with the objective

[7] Aggregate Measurement of Support" and "AMS" mean the annual level of support, expressed in monetary terms, provided for an agricultural product in favour of the producers of the basic agricultural product or non-product-specific support provided in favour of agricultural producers in general, other than support provided under programmes that qualify as exempt from reduction under Annex 2 to this Agreement

of "meeting food requirements of urban and rural poor in developing countries on a regular basis at reasonable prices" (WTO 1999). This is important for countries which provide subsidized food through fair price shops on a regular basis. This provision however does not extend to expenditures (or revenue foregone) in relation to consumer support.

Stabilization policy options

There are also several WTO-compatible measures that a country may use to mitigate the effects of market instability on food security.

Food security stocks. These are not only subject to specific provisions in the Agreement under which they can be procured and released; but must also be clearly identified as a stabilization instrument integral to the country's food security programme as outline in national legislation. Both developed and developing countries have since used this option to gain exemption from AMS limitations by declaring their stockholding operations under the Green Box. As of yet there has not been any serious challenges from WTO members concerning this exemption (Konandreas 2000).

Safeguards. Under specific circumstances nism countries can levy additional tariffs by employing the *special safeguards clause* (SSG) of the AoA and the general WTO safeguards. This is however used in limitation by developing countries as the SSG clause was reserved for products which were subject to tariffication, only a small number of developing countries have resort to this provision, as only a few used the tariffication formula to bind their tariffs (Konandreas 2000). In addition, these measures are subject to extensive procedural requirements, thus making them of little practical use to developing countries.

Tariffs. There is an option of a *sliding scale of tariffs* which countries may use to adjust the level of import prices. The nature of this option is that it allows countries with fairly high bound tariffs to offset variations in import prices by reducing tariffs when prices rise and raising them when prices fall. Also any maximum rate of duty applied must stay below at the country's bound rate of duty (Konandreas 2000). Import tariffs are adjusted only when import prices go outside a range of floor and ceiling prices through what is referred to as "price band" policy (Konandreas 2000).

Export prohibitions. There is also provision in Article 12 of the AoA allows a country to put limitations on exports providing other (the importing) countries' food security is taken into account. In practice this occurs during times of sharply rising world prices or sharply rising demand from a neighbouring country (Konandreas 2000).

One other option is risk management instruments which mitigate the effects of price variability. Market-based instruments such as forward and futures price contracts and options are fully compatible with the WTO.

On the surface of the aforementioned policies options intrinsic to the AoA it is expected such an agreement would result in "correcting and preventing restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets" (FAO 2002). As is well known, the focus of the framers of the AoA was a perceived need to correct a situation of mounting production surpluses in a number of food products produced in a number of developed countries through rising levels of budgetary support and import protection (FAO 2002). The most direct trade-distorting aspect of this situation was the escalating use of export subsidies (subsidy "wars") to dispose of these mounting surpluses on world agricultural markets (FAO 2002).

On the contrary however this was not the reality for the vast majority of developing countries. Rather than excessive support and rising production surpluses, the situation was one of inadequate production and insufficient support to raise agricultural productivity and food production in line with their food needs and agricultural potential (Haniotis 2004). Hence, the situation of many food insecure countries is fundamentally different, and, accordingly, requires a different approach from that of reducing support to agriculture (Haniotis 2004).

Food Security Concerns Under the Economic Partnership Agreement

Aside from its multilateral obligations via the WTO, the region (CARICOM) is signatory to various other trade agreements i.e. regionally and bi-laterally. These include *bilaterals* with Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, United States of America, and Venezuela, the pending agreement with Canada and the controversial Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with CARIFORUM (CARICOM and Dominican Republic) and the European Union. These various trade agreements all signal the widening process of trade and economic relations between CARICOM and the rest of the world; thus essentially following the trend of greater trade liberalization and market access for goods and services.

While all these Agreements are critical to the region's trade and development aspirations, the EPA is the one most found under the microscope for its contribution to development. This EPA succeeds several decades of trade relations between the region and the EU governed under four economic/trade arrangements with Europe known as the Lomé Conventions. Each successive Agreement built and expanded on the previous one (Government of Barbados, Ministry of

Foreign Affairs and Trade 2007). Such trade relations started in 1975 and lasted up until 1999. In 2000, the establishment of a new framework for trade and development between the EU and the region was developed under the Cotonou Agreement (Caribbean Export Development Agency 2009). The preferential trade access to EU markets which ACP states enjoyed under the Lomé convention, which offered ACP countries, discriminated against other developing countries and thus was not WTO-compatible[8] (Caribbean Export Development Agency 2009). The Cotonou Agreement thus laid the basis for new, reciprocal, and WTO-consistent trading agreements between the European Union and six groupings of ACP.

In April 2004 the CARIFORUM countries and the EU launched the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations with the objective of covering the full range of trade issues (Roberts 2010). By October 2008 the final Agreement was signed by 15 member states of CARIFORUM and 27 member states of the European Union marking a milestone in international trade for small, vulnerable economies of the Caribbean away from preferences towards reciprocal trade and substantial liberalization between the parties in products originating in such territories (Thorburn, Rapley, King, Campbell 2010). One of the major features of the Agreement is its comprehensive and far reaching nature covering trade in goods and services, investment, trade related issues like innovation and intellectual property as well as links to development cooperation. By explicitly taking into account the development objectives, needs and interests of the CARIFORUM region, the EPA is very different from every other trade agreement negotiated up to now between developed and developing countries. For instance while the agreement contains provisions on market access of goods and services between the two regions, it also contains key provisions on development in which the EU has committed to assisting the CARIFORUM economies in areas of technical assistance and capacity building so that the developing economies can have better access to the European market[9]. The development dimension of the EPA is shown in the box below[10]:

[8] Lomé had been sustained only because other WTO members granted two waivers on the understanding that its preferences would be phased out

[9] http://www.belize.org/tiz/cariforum-eu-economic-partnership-agreement

[10] Sourced from The CARIFORUM/EU Economic Partnership Agreement: An Executive Summary by the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Trade and Industry

Box 2: Development Dimension of the EPA

The provisions for development cooperation are:

(i) **Part I – Trade Partnership for Sustainable Development and**

(ii) **Joint Declaration on Development Cooperation.**

Part I – Trade Partnership for Sustainable Development

This establishes the basis for CARIFORUM-EC cooperation, which is outlined in the EPA Objectives and Principles. Along with the Promotion of Sustainable Development, the EPA is envisioned to move beyond traditional trade in goods and services to cover critical areas such as Regional Integration, Cooperation in international fora, Development Cooperation and Identification of Cooperation Priorities.

The **EPA Objectives** are:

a. Contributing to the reduction and eventual eradication of poverty
b. Promoting regional integration, economic cooperation
c. Promoting the gradual integration of CARIFORUM States into the world economy
d. Improving CARIFORUM States' capacity in trade policy and trade related issues
e. Supporting conditions for increasing investment and private sector initiative and enhancing supply capacity, competitiveness and economic growth CARIFORUM States
f. Strengthening the existing relations between the Parties on the basis of solidarity and mutual interest.

Cooperation priorities focus primarily on:
a. Technical assistance to build human, legal and institutional capacity
b. Capacity and Institution building for fiscal reform to strengthen tax administration and tax collection
c. Support measures for promoting private sector and enterprise development – SMEs, competitiveness and diversification
d. Diversification of the economy through new investment and development of new sectors
e. Enhancing technological and research capabilities
f. Development of innovation systems and technological capacity
g. Support for infrastructural development.

Part II - Joint Declaration on Development Cooperation

This Declaration between both Parties to the Agreement recognizes:
(i) The adjustment difficulties associated with the implementation of the Agreement, especially for smaller economies among the CARIFORUM States i.e CARICOM LDCs (Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, St Kitts and Nevis)
(ii) The need for improving regional infrastructure to enable CARIFORUM to take full advantage of opportunities offered by the EPA.

To actualize the Declaration, assistance is to be provided under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) Caribbean Regional Indicative Programme (CRIP). EU Member States will also complement with Aid for Trade (AFT) contributions

developed members and it shows pre-emptive safeguards that are linked to food security (which is not the case in all other EPAs). This reference to food security serves as one of the bilateral safeguard measures established by the Agreement, not subject to the WTO settlement. Specific reference in the Agreement to food security is found under Article 37 – Agriculture and Fisheries (EC 2008). Given the importance of these industries to both parties, the provisions contained here also cover sustainable development, change of information and consultation, provision for traditional cultural products and cooperation (Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Trade and Industry 2008).

Safeguards such as food security et al can be applied when import of a product may "*cause or threaten to cause*" (i) serious injury to a domestic industry, (ii) disturbances in a sector of the economy including major social problems or difficulties which could bring about serious deterioration in the economic situation or (iii) disturbances in competitive agricultural product markets. A safeguard measure for the protection of infant industries is equally foreseen, but can only be applied for a period of ten years following the date of entry into force of the EPA. As usual in safeguard clauses, such measures can only be maintained for the time strictly necessary to prevent or remedy the serious injury or disturbance, cannot exceed two years and can be renewed only once (Girvan 2008).

Food Security Situation in the Caribbean

In a region where agriculture has historically been the backbone of the economy and the small-scale domestic food sector, food security is of crucial importance. Unfortunately almost every country in the CARICOM region except perhaps Belize, Guyana, and Suriname has seen dramatic reduction in food output and has become a net importer of food (Garcia and Smart 2011)[11]. In addition, since food (in)security is often construed simply in terms of availability, there is an underlying complacency in addressing the issue because the dramatic and sensationalized incidents of hunger often seen in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia are largely unknown in the region. However, it is now acknowledged that the region faces urgent and significant food security challenges. This is particularly noticeable with the decline in agricultural productivity and earnings from traditional export crops, as well as a high and growing dependence on imported food, increasing levels of poverty and increases in diet-related diseases like diabetes, hypertension and obesity[12](Bernd, Rudder, Reid 2012).

According to Clinton Beckford food security or insecurity in the Caribbean is affected by several major factors. i) declines in productivity of land, labour and management in the agricultural sector resulting in a weakening capacity to supply food competitively; ii) decline in earnings from traditional export crops resulting in a reduced ability to purchase food; iii) the erosion and threatened loss of trade preferences for traditional export crops - the earnings of which are used to buy imported food; iv) the very high dependence on imported food and the uncertainty of food arrival associated with external shocks; v) the increasing incidents of pockets of poverty

[11] Garcia, Sergio, and Mike Smart. "CARICOM Moves Towards Food and Nutrition Security." *CARICOM View* (2011): 2-4. CARICOM Secretariat, July 2011. Web. July 5

[12] Bultemeier, Bernd, Winston Rudder, and Robert Reid. "Promoting CARICOM/CARIFORUM Food Security: Phase II"- GTFS/RLA/141/ITA." Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, Jan. 2012. Web. July 2013.

which affects peoples access to food; vi) concerns over the association of the high use of imported foods and growing incidents of diet-related diseases as people become estranged from local traditional foods and environment and adopt North American foods and lifestyles (Beckford 2012).

The Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI) also conducted research into the food insecurity situation in the Caribbean, specifically considering the impact of economic policies on nutrition and health. The research focused on the impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) particularly on health and nutrition drawing heavily from the findings of a larger study conducted by CFNI to evaluate the impact of SAPs on poor households in Jamaica and Guyana during the post 1989 period (Henry 2012). Indeed SAPs encompassed significant economic policy changes and reflected fundamental shifts in development-thinking away from protected and highly subsidized nationally inward-looking markets, to open, competitive and less subsidized externally-oriented markets. In Jamaica, these policies were implemented at a time when government spending was characterized by drastic cuts in education, health and food subsidies and other state sponsored economic activities (Henry 2012).

The prescription on how best to deal with the economic crises in Jamaica was a series of structural adjustment programmes that contained economic policies (5) aimed at, *inter alia*:

(i) Fiscal restraint, *viz*, reduction in government spending on education, health and other social services, wage restraint, elimination of government subsidies on food *etc*;

(ii) Economic liberalization, *ie* greater reliance on market signals to allocate resources, set prices, and reduction/elimination of barriers to trade and investment;

(iii) Privatization of state owned enterprises (SOEs) and other social services; and

(iv) Monetary discipline, *viz*, tight monetary policies, including reduced access to credit, high interest rates, market determined exchange rates *etc*.

The findings of the study concluded that the SAPs policies subscribed to by the Jamaican government collided with the living standards of the population who hitherto benefitted from subsidized food and social services (health, education, water and sanitation and social welfare). Loss of employment, an overburdened health system and general erosion of purchasing power placed further hardships on the population, especially those who were poor and marginalized. While some of the macro-indicators of the SAPs were impressive, they failed to accurately describe the effects on the poor (Henry 2012).

Jamaica was also presented as an interesting case study of the decline in food security in the region by Beckford as he investigated *Issues on Caribbean Food Security*. According to his findings, in that country "*domestic food production has plummeted from the halcyon period of the mid-1990s when food production peaked over 650,000 tons*". Since this time, a combination of various factors has led to decrease food production, particularly a series of devastating hazards including hurricanes, droughts and floods (Beckford 2012). Estimates indicated that agricultural losses just from hurricanes in 2007 were approximately US$285 million (McGregor, Barker and Campbell, 2009). Cheap foreign imports also presented overwhelming competition for small-scale food producers. As a result of their low resource base, high price of inputs, unsophisticated marketing and distribution, general lack of access to financial resources, and inability to engage in scale economies many of these producers succumbed to competition mainly from the USA and subsequently quit farming (Beckford and Bailey, 2009). Beckford, Barker and Bailey (2007) also pointed out the dual nature of the agricultural structure in Jamaican. This dualism resulted in resource allocation biases toward the traditional export crop sector including, sugar, coffee, citrus, and bananas much to the detriment of non-traditional crops such as root crops, yams and sweet potatoes, exotic fruits and vegetables, herbs and spices. This in turn influenced agricultural policy, skewing the relationships between small-scale food farmers and centers of economic and political power (Beckford, Barker and Bailey, 2007). These problems were further exacerbated by limited size of the domestic market for the range of products offered by local farmers and limited farmland (FAO, 2007).

For the wider Caribbean, while the famine and hunger which characterize much of Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia are typically not associated with the region – with the notable exception of Haiti – the extent of food production, the state of the region's food import bill, the level of poverty, and the incidence of diet-related diseases, are usually taken as the indicators of food security particular to the Caribbean. Furthermore when considered within the dimensions of accessibility and availability, the food situation in the Caribbean is better understood. Food availability is determined by local production, agro processing, food aid, food trade and food reserves.

Findings of the FAO study done in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat as part of a project on Promoting CARICOM/CARIFORUM Food Security shows that CARICOM countries as a whole have moved from net exporters to net importers of food. Consequently the region's food import bill has risen of approximately US$3.5billion (Silva, Best, Tefft 2011). The study also revealed that some countries have just about doubled their food import bill in the space of 10 years. This has unfortunately coincided with stagnant agricultural output from the region. See Table 1.

Table 1[13]: FIB Values for Individual CARICOM Member States Decade Intervals (1968-2008)

	1968	1978	1988	1998	2008	% Share CARICOM FIB 2008	% Share CARICOM Population	Rank CARICOM per capita GDP
Antigua & Barbuda	3.9	10.3	25.1	n.a.	64.4	1.63%	0.5%	3
Bahamas	27.9	49.0	169.6	296.0	498.4	12.58%	2.1%	1
Barbados	16.4	53.5	80.7	133.8	265.2	6.69%	1.7%	4
Belize	6.5	22.1	33.2	51.2	97.6	2.46%	2.0%	9
Dominica	2.7	7.3	14.3	20.2	31.7	0.80%	0.5%	11
Grenada	3.2	10.3	20.9	28.5	54.5	1.38%	0.7%	7
Guyana	16.1	34.0	20.4	67.8	142.5	3.60%	4.8%	13
Haiti	10.7	50.9	136.5	353.6	882.4	22.27%	56.7%	14
Jamaica	54.0	168.4	209.7	429.8	873.6	22.05%	17.7%	10
St Kitts & Nevis	2.4	5.1	13.6	n.a.	46.7	1.18%	0.3%	5
St Lucia	3.1	15.7	37.0	58.6	93	2.35%	1.0%	6
St Vincent & Gren.	2.7	11.4	21.1	36.1	66.1	1.67%	0.8%	8
Suriname	10.5	36.7	31.2	n.a.	115.3	2.91%	3.0%	12
T&T	38.4	167.6	186.6	295.4	731.2	18.45%	8.2%	2
CARICOM Total	**198.4**	**642.4**	**1,000.0**	**1,771.0**	**3,962.60**			

Source Silva, Best, Tefft 2011

The study continues to show that while the Caribbean continues to produce a large share of foodstuffs (including fruits, vegetables, pulses, meat, fish, rice and beverages), there are key categories of staples where the region's food producers have lost competitive market share to cheaper and/or more expensively branded imports. This loss of market share has resulted in a reduction of domestic production which lends to a greater demand for imports and in turn, affect consumer preferences toward the lower priced and often more consistently available imported substitutes. Table 2 shows the current composition of the CARICOM FIB by food product.

Table 2[14] Composition of the CARICOM FIB by Food Product

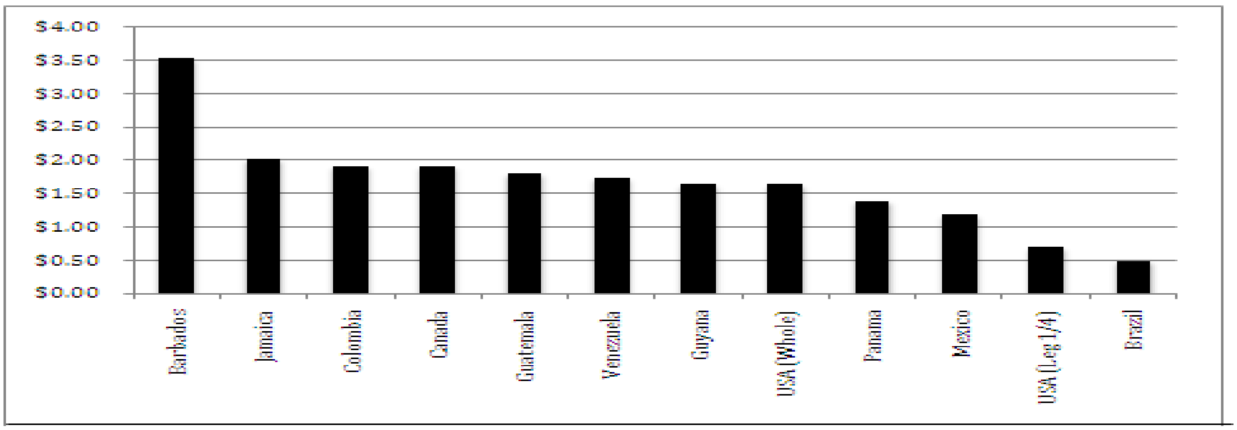
Food Product	Import Value US$ M	Notes
Wheat, Maize and Derived products	$489M	
Food Preparations	$455M	Excludes extracts, sauces, cereals, soups and ice creams
Chicken, pork, beef, mutton	$420M	
Cheese and dry/evaporated milk	$403.5M	
Rice	$287.8M	Milled/husked/broken, paddy
Beverages	$255M	
Sugar	$191M	Both raw and refined
Fisheries	$174M	Dried, frozen, and smoked
Animal Feed	$160M	Largely inputs into domestic production

Source Silva, Best, Tefft 2011

[13] Extracted from Silva, Best, Teftt, 2011
[14] Extracted from Silva, Best, Teftt, 2011

Silva, Best, Tefft (2011) contend that the imports further restrict the domestic market and squeeze profit margins for producers. The main reason for this stems from the fact that most of CARICOM's imports are heavily subsidized food items from North and Latin America, where farmers are enabled to sell for less than the cost of production (Windfuhr, 2002, 2003; Windfuhr and Jonsen, 2005). In turn the region's farmers are faced with uneven competitive situations and in Jamaica for example, many have succumbed to this dumping of cheap exports and gone out of business (Beckford and Bailey, 2009). Silva, Best, Tefft (2011) provide a comparative look at of poultry producers from Caricom, North America and Latin America.

Figure 3[15]: Price/Cost Competitive Comparison Between CARICOM and North American Producers (2005)



Source Silva, Best, Tefft 2011

Figure 3 shows that CARICOM producers are the least cost competitive of the producers.

Silva, Best and Tefft argue that the region's producers face multiple handicaps that increase both the cost and risk of production, placing them at a price disadvantage vis-à-vis larger overseas competitors. Given these handicaps, there are strong concerns that food imports are "crowding out" domestic production, particularly in those sectors where there exists direct competition (e.g. frozen poultry/beef versus fresh poultry/beef) or high substitutability (e.g. wheat flour versus cassava flour), with producers in Jamaica, T&T, Barbados, Belize and Guyana particularly vulnerable (2011). Silva, Best and Tefft also added that some of the same products posing a competitive threat are also a key input item for regional producers. For example, in the case of poultry and pork livestock producers, close to 50% of production costs are concentrated in feed, of which the vast majority is imported from the United States (and where regional production in T&T, Jamaica, Barbados and Guyana relies heavily on imported inputs). While wheat imports are a direct competitive threat to regional substitutes such as cassava, it is a key input into the regional baked goods and savoury snacks industry, as are other grains/cereals such as barley and hops for the regional beverages industry (2011).

[15] Extracted from Silva, Best, Teftt, 2011

Furthermore over-reliance on imported food also exposes these countries to external shocks such as international price volatility, food availability, and policy directives of its trade partners. For instance increases in world food prices tend to negatively impact trade (and current account) balances. Table 3 shows merchandise imports composition in 2007. In the Most Developed Countries (MDCs), food imports' share in total goods' imports range from 7.3% in Trinidad and Tobago to 17.8% in Barbados. These values are relatively higher in Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU) countries where four of the six countries (for which data is available) i.e. Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines) exhibited food imports-to-total imports ratios above 15%.

Table 3 Merchandise Composition, 2007[16]

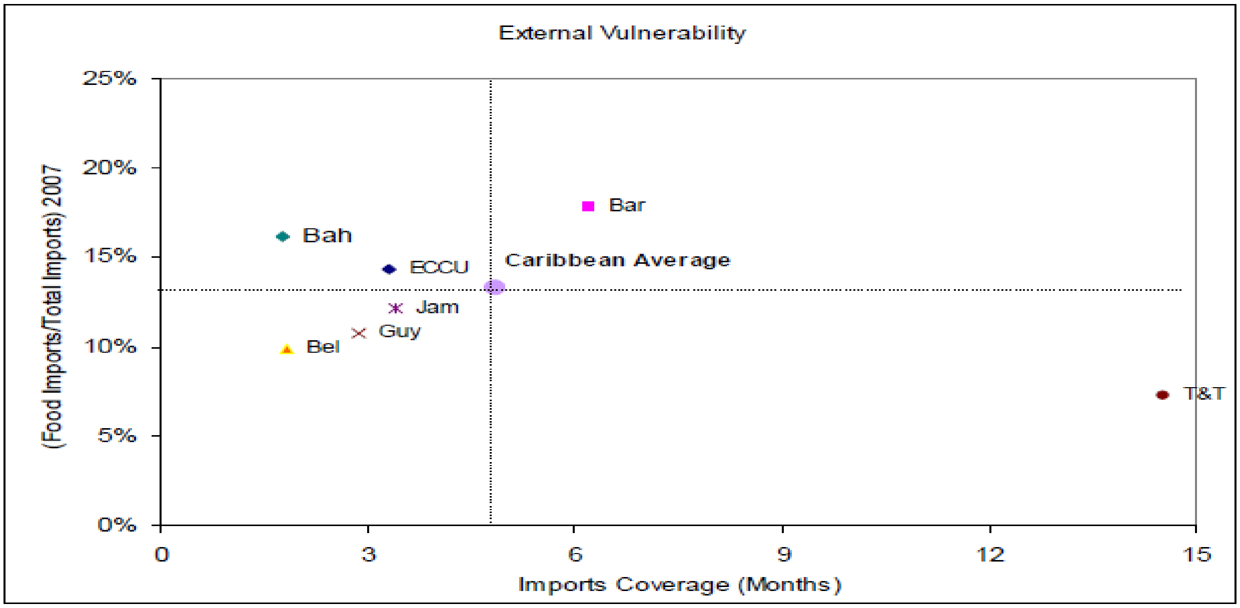
	Food	Non-food	Total (Million of US$)
MDCs			
Bahamas	16.2	83.8	3,104
Barbados	17.8	82.2	1,497
Belize	9.9	90.1	708
Guyana	10.7	89.3	1,063
Jamaica	12.2	87.8	6,597
Suriname	..	..	..
Trinidad and Tobago	7.3	92.7	5,477
ECCU			
Anguilla	8.8	91.2	246
Antigua and Barbuda	11.4	88.6	727
Dominica	18.1	81.9	198
Grenada	..	..	..
Montserrat	..	..	..
St. Kitts and Nevis	15.9	84.1	273
St. Lucia	16.0	84.0	615
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	18.2	81.8	313

Source ECLAC

ECLAC constructed a measure to further evaluated these countries' vulnerability to external shocks. Using the import coverage (in months) provided by net international reserves available to the central bank it can be determined to what extent countries are vulnerable to external developments. Countries with higher levels of international reserves in relation to their import requirements would be more resilient to external shocks. Combining this indicator with the food imports-to-total goods imports ratio, figure 18 maps the external vulnerability of Caribbean countries attached to imported food dependence and rising world food prices. In this case, countries located in the upper left hand quadrant are more vulnerable whereas those located in the lower right hand quadrant are less sensitive to increases in international food prices. The quadrants are determined by regional (simple) averages of the share of food imports on total imports (13.3%) and of imports coverage (4.8 months).

[16] Extracted from The Escalation In World Food Prices And Its Implications For The Caribbean, ECLAC (2008)

Figure 4. **External vulnerability to rising world food prices, 2007**[17]



Source ECLAC

Overall, Bahamas appears to be the most vulnerable country in the Caribbean as a result of a relatively high food imports-to-total imports ratio (16.2%) coupled with a low level of international reserves, equivalent to only 1.8 months of imports. Similarly, taken as a group, the ECCU countries also present a high level of vulnerability, with above average share of food imports on total imports (14.3%) and below average import coverage (4 months). Although Belize exhibits similar coverage to Bahamas, its situation is comparatively better because food imports share in total imports is lower (9.9%). Likewise, Guyana and Jamaica combine a low level of imports coverage with a below average food imports-to-total imports ratio, to the tune of 10.7% and 12.2%, respectively. The opposite is true in Barbados, as this country counterbalances its relatively high food imports (17.8% of total imports) with international reserves coverage of 6.2 months. This is the 2nd highest in the region, after Trinidad and Tobago which by has the strongest position in the region. Being an exporter of oil and gas, Trinidad and Tobago has accumulated significant trade and current account surpluses over the last few years, fuelled by rising energy prices in world markets. Consequently, net international reserves have soared, tripling between 2003 and 2007, when they amounted to US$6,659 million, or 14.5 months of imports.

The Caribbean also faces external challenges through increasing inflationary pressures stemming from the international trade markets. Households and individuals will also be consequently

[17] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. *The Escalation of World Food Prices and Its Implications for the Caribbean*. Working paper no. LC/CAR/L.179. Santiago, Chile: ECLAC, 2008. Web. 16 Mar. 2013.

affected as real income and consumption will be adversely affected, thereby directly contributing to the increase in poverty and inequality. These social consequences could eventually pose an unfortunate drawback in regional achievements of poverty reduction and social development goals. In fact, the World Bank and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations have estimated that the global food crisis has already eliminated seven years of global advances in the movement against poverty thus severely jeopardizing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)[18]. Moreover, estimations of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) indicate that a 15% increase in food prices in 2008 relative to 2007 would push more than 200 million people into poverty and some 84 million people into indigence in Latin America and the Caribbean[19]. The implications of this are an increase in both poverty and indigence rates of near three percentage points[20].

In fact, ECLAC has already found that the five years of positive economic growth enjoyed by Latin America and the Caribbean between 2002 and 2007 may very well have been undermined by the financial crisis. It suggested that the 27 million individuals who left poverty during this period may return to poverty, thus making it impossible to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in many of our countries. The World Food Program now states that, instead of reducing poverty by 50% in 2015, as proposed by the MDGs, an additional 100 million people will return to poverty. Food insecurity and poverty, and the MDGs demand solutions to improve the income of thousands of families and to ensure that the most vulnerable groups enjoy adequate financial conditions that do not jeopardize their food situation.

[18] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. *The Escalation of World Food Prices and Its Implications for the Caribbean*. Working paper no. LC/CAR/L.179. Santiago, Chile: ECLAC, 2008. Web. 16 Mar. 2013.

[19] Ibid

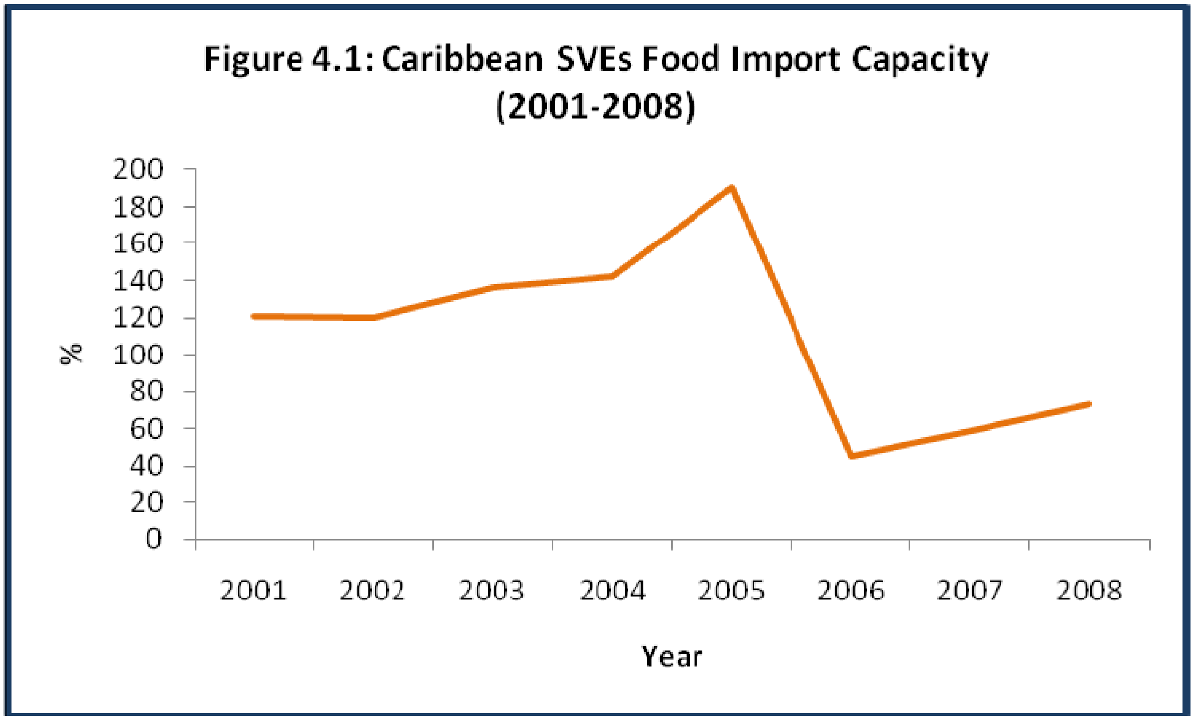
[20] ibid

The Effects of the Trade Obligations on the Region's Food Security Concerns

General Observations

'Trade contributes to food security in a number of ways: it augments domestic supplies to meet domestic consumption needs; it reduces supply variability, though not necessarily price instability; it fosters economic growth; it makes more efficient use of world resources; and it permits global production to take place in those regions most suited to it.' (Konandreas 2000) Trade liberalization may change global trading structures and trade patterns. The numerous stakeholders are also affected as it may cause adjustments in the expenditure and revenue of governments, incomes of producers and purchasing power of consumers. For Caribbean territories, the forecasted increase of their share in global agricultural trade was not realized at the end of the AoA implementation period (Pennycooke 2011). Pennycooke observed that their share in global agricultural trade remained relatively unchanged before and after implementation. Even the idea that agricultural products of the Caribbean will have increased access to markets with high restrictions or new markets was not actually realized. Firstly the agricultural sector of the region and thus its products were limited by inefficiencies and the inability to transfer factors of production to gain competitive advantage in particular products (Pennycooke 2011). Secondly Caribbean producers faced non-tariff barriers of developed countries such as technical regulations and standards, particularly with their major trading partners North America and the EU (Pennycooke 2011).

She noted that the liberalization process resulted in large tariff cuts, binding of tariffs at high levels and relatively low applied rates. Pennycooke adds that as a result, Caribbean countries are described as "small and highly open and liberalized economies". The result of this has been increased competition from cheaper and higher quality imports, providing increased variety for consumers (Pennycooke 2011). In fact imported goods make up a considerable portion of the composition of the domestic food supply of many Caribbean economies; which is reflected in the soaring food import bill which reached as much as US$7.024 billion in 2008 and appears to be continuously rising. This food import dependence in turn affects the ability of agricultural exports to finance food imports. Figure 4.1 following shows a notable decline in the region's food import capacity in recent years, quite contrary to the import capacity of the mid-1990s.



Source Pennycooke 2011

It should be noted that concerns have been raised by the Caribbean SVEs that low price imports and import surges, if not properly managed, can have adverse effects in the small and fragile agricultural sectors of the SVEs (WTO July 2005). In fact, sustained lower priced imports have over time affected domestic markets, increasing producer loss as they are unable to compete at such prices. This also undermines the incentive to invest in agriculture and hinders the production of substitutes of wheat, dairy products, beef and other subsidized commodities. In an attempt to reduce the negative impact of these low-priced imports, governments have maintained instruments such as import licensing to curb import surges. The high tariffs of the Caribbean SVEs, however, means higher prices to consumers as prices increases for producers (Pennycooke 2011). This reflects the findings of the research conducted by Silva Best and Tefft[21].

"Imports further restrict the domestic market and squeeze profit margins for producers. The main reason for this stems from the fact that most of CARICOM's imports are heavily subsidized food items from North and Latin America, where farmers are enabled to sell for less than the cost of production (Windfuhr, 2002, 2003; Windfuhr and Jonsen, 2005). In turn the region's farmers are faced with uneven competitive situations and in Jamaica for example, many have succumbed to this dumping of cheap exports and gone out of business (Beckford and Bailey, 2009)."

Similar issues of food security were raised under the scope and obligations of the CARIFORUM/EU EPA. The Caribbean Policy Research Institute (CAPRI) conducted an impact assessment of the

[21] See Page 16

EPA on Caribbean economies. The exercise observed the effect of tariff reduction on EU imports to the Caribbean and consequently to the economies of the region. Unlike Pennycooke's conclusions of the effects of the WTO-AoA, the main assertion from the EPA assessment was that reductions in tariffs will shift expenditure in favour of now relatively cheaper EU imports for those goods for which a significant tariff existed. With this shift in expenditure away from domestic production in the now relative uncompetitive commodities, incomes fall in those industries and resources are released that will eventually be redirected to other economic activities. At the same time, the savings from purchasing cheaper goods will be spent in other ways (CAPRI 2009). This combination movement of relative supply and demand lends to an economy with a changed structure of production, and considerably effects the government's revenues.

The institute assesses these changes in expenditure and production with the use of a simulated computable equilibrium model of the economy. Such models are useful to ensure consistency across all their results by ensuring that all participants in the economy – consumers, firms and the government – spend only what they earn or can finance; and that demand and supply match in all markets, even when outside factors, such as cheaper imports, force adjustment (CAPRI 2009).

The overall finding of the exercise is that any disruptive effect of competitive importation on the four economies studied – Jamaica, St. Lucia, Trinidad & Tobago, and Guyana – will be limited and small. This conclusion derives from three structural characteristics (CAPRI 2009). The first to note is that price is just one influence on trading patterns amongst many others. Thus price responses to tariff reductions of the order 5 to 7 percent on average are not sufficient to substantially affect trade – even with demand for EU goods being highly responsive to price changes. Success or substantial trade is still subject to other factors of history, language, culture, proximity, and endowments (CAPRI 2009). Secondly, Caribbean imports consist of what these economies cannot reasonably and competitively produce already, so a cheaper European source largely serves to divert trade from another imported source (CAPRI 2009). Thirdly, the particular commodities to which tariff reductions apply represent only a small fraction of the productive activities of the region (CAPRI 2009). Some of the liberalization applies to products that the Caribbean will never import, such as fur coats, while others have been deliberately excluded (CAPRI 2009).

With the results above the Institute therefore concludes that the downside to the EPA for the small economies of the Caribbean, was seen largely to be the fear of dramatic dislocation even in the presence of long term benefits. However, that dislocation turns out to be negligible. If there is to be an upside from the EPA, the hope lies in the service sectors and the use to which the development assistance is put. That is where much effort should – and, it is expected, will – go, and that is where the gains from this trade agreement are likely to be concentrated.

Havelock Brewster estimation of the impact of the Agreement takes a completely different approach. He considers the impact or usefulness of the Agreement for the region especially in light of mounting food import bills, declining if not stagnant agricultural sectors, and the increase incidences of obesity in the region (2008). Brewster identifies the root of these problems as an issue of production. His main contention is that the Common External Tariff (CET) which was implemented to address this issue; was ineffective against these problems with certain governments even having to suspend it in order to reduce food prices and the EPA makes very little contribution in solving this problem (Brewster 2008). He points out that any import restriction desired to be invoke by Caribbean Governments in the interest of food security is subject to consultation procedures in the Joint Trade and Development Committee, "*thus dependent on EC approval of the safeguard measure to be employed"* (Brewster 2008). Therefore unless there is agreement from the EC, such measures cannot be readily imposed by any of the region's governments. This in particular has been criticized by opponents to the Agreement as a 'signing away of future rights".

Given these observations on the impact of these Agreements on the economies of the Caribbean, it stands to reason that the region's governments would put measures in place to counter or at least minimize these effects. These measures can be both collective and individual and should serve to carve out some policy space or improvements in the agri-sectors to promote and stimulate production in these areas.

The Region's Response to Food Security Concerns in the Context of International Obligations

One of the major measures the region put in place to address its food security concerns is the CARICOM Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy (RFNSP). The policy articulates a shared vision of CARICOM Member States on the issue and seeks to *"unify and reinforce the various efforts made so far at national and regional levels, providing the Community with an empirically-grounded, feasible and widely supported operational frame of reference for the achievement of food and nutrition security providing the equilibrium for consumers to access food at affordable prices while producers get a fair price for their products" (RFNSP 2010)*

The four main food and nutrition security objectives of the RFNSP are: **1) food availability; 2) food access; 3) proper food utilization for good health, nutrition and wellbeing; and 4) stable and sustainable food supplies at all times.** The policy outlines specific policy objectives and priorities to address these objectives on the premise that the "**achievement of the optimum degree of self reliance through a strategy of feeding, clothing and housing the population, utilising to the greatest extent possible and feasible, indigenous raw materials, human and natural resources" (RFNSP 2010).**

As it relates to food availability, the policy seeks to:

1. promote increased availability of regionally produced nutritious food at competitive market prices through the utilization of a territorial approach to production planning in the region.
2. improve production and productivity of the identified food and livestock; commodities/products;
3. increase cost efficiency of value added production for locally produced and imported semi-processed foods and livestock products; and
4. create an enabling environment for the production and marketing of local foods

The issue of food access is tackled from the perspective of ensuring access of Caribbean households and individuals to sufficient, nutritious, affordable food at all times. The policy encourages Member States to ratify the Right to Food Convention and implement its Guidelines. Moreover, in recognition of the Region's food distribution inefficiencies and high income inequalities, taking into account the disparities between the rural and urban areas. CARICOM member states are also instructed to ensure that the population has economic and physical access to food at all times by:

1. Improving access to livelihood assets
2. Improving the regional distribution system

On the dimension of food utilization the policy also seeks to promote the commercialization and consumption of safe, affordable nutritious quality Caribbean food commodities. This is particularly essential in recognition of the current challenge facing the region with respect to the increasing levels of obesity, NCDs, iron deficiency, and persistent pockets of under nutrition. In this regard the policy will also target education institution to intervene and prevent or provide early control of some of the above identified problems. Efforts will also be made to improve existing regional food standards relating to food safety and labeling.

Finally the RFNSP aims to tackle food stability in the region through improved food and nutrition security resislience to natural and socio-economic shocks and climate change. The policy also outlines its plan to mitigate these effects should they occur.

Also embedded in the RFNSP is the implementation strategy which outlines the concrete actions to be taken for this initiative to be materialized. The implementation will be coordinated at both the national and regional levels, and will covers the areas of

1. Mobilization of resources
2. Capacity building
3. Public education and advocacy
4. Consensus building
5. Information for decision making
6. Monitoring and evaluation

As part of the implementation process, the Regional Food and Nutrition Security Action plan (RFNSAP) was also conceptualized. The action Plan places a special emphasis on households; particularly small, poor producers, indigenous peoples, youth, woman and consumers. There is also a significant focus n private/private partnerships, governmental/private strategic alliances and participation of non-governmental institutions, civil society and community-based organizations and producer and consumer associations involved in development (RFNSAP 2011). Essentially the RFNSAP is designed to:

"contribute to improved standards of living, greater social security protection and sustained economic development. It covers a number of strategic actions under the four FNS components of the Policy, distinguishing between actions at the regional and country levels and addressing income and gender inequalities between and within Member States as well as the relatively higher incidence of poverty among indigenous peoples. It follows the set of guiding implementation principles laid out in the Policy; establishes an institutional framework for implementation; and defines a number of objectives as the basis for measuring its impact" (RFNSAP 2011).

Based on this framework and with support from the CFNI, PAHO/WHO and the FAO, several Caribbean countries have prepared their own Food and Nutrition Security policies. These national policies are expected to underpin the RFNSP and RFNSAP and ensure consistency among these states as well as between them and the RFNSP. Antigua and Barbuda is one such country that already has a FNS policy.

This country based its policy on its food and nutrition goals, as well as the requirement for its agriculture and food distribution system (Govt Antigua and Barbuda 2012). The policy also cites several observations also shared with the rest of the region. These include[22]:

i) high international food and input prices;

ii) a steady decline in the productivity and competitiveness of its agricultural products, attributed mainly to the process of trade liberalization, as well as domestic limitations including institutional, structural, infrastructural, economic and technological factors; and

iii) heavy dependence of the country on a wide range of imported foods has resulted in the country being designated a 'Net-Food Importing Developing Country (NFIDC)'

Within the policy there are several policy statements that speak to each dimension of food security. Embedded within the document is also an institutional framework which outlines the respective roles for the various ministries, private sector, educational, research and development organizations. Overall the policy recognizes the importance of incorporating good governance practices or Right to Food principles, including issues related to participation, accountability, non-discrimination, transparency, full respect for human dignity, empowerment, rule of law, and inclusion and considerations of equity.

Barbados has recently completed the final draft of its own FNS policy based on the same reasons identified above for Antigua and Barbuda. This particular policy expressly states this country's commitment to making FNS and reality for all Barbadians (Govt of Barbados 2013). It is expected that the policy will increase Barbados' capacity to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly MDG 1. The document cites that FNS challenges and gaps in the current policy environment for FNS are the main motivating factors behind the formulation of the Barbados FNS policy (Govt of Barbados 2013).

The government of Jamaica is also preparing to institute that country's food and nutrition security policy. In a newsletter of the Jamaica Information Service (JIS), Agriculture and Fisheries Minister, Hon. Roger Clarke, reiterated that country's government's determination to ensure "that our people have available and reasonably priced, nutritious foods. Jamaica's FNS policy seeks to:[23]

(i) Define the food and nutritional goals that are to be met so that the country's agriculture and food systems can deliver adequate and nutritionally appropriate quantities of food, especially to low-income and vulnerable groups;

(ii) Make prescriptions for a structured food import replacement program and a re-orientation of food imports and the food distribution system, to increase the availability of good quality-nutritious foods in Jamaica.

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[22] See Government of Antigua and Barbuda. CFNI/PAHO/WHO/FAO. *A Food and Nutrition Security Policy for Antigua and Barbuda*. Antigua and Barbuda: Government, Sep 2012. http://www.zerohungerchallengelac.org/ab/doc/FoodNutritionSecurityPolicyAG.pdf.

[23] Government of Jamaica Cabinet Office GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AS AT 1 APRIL 2012,

The government has also incorporated the partnership of farmers by urging them to increase their output to support this and other efforts to safeguard the nation's food security. The Minister said that the farmers "lead by example" by boosting outputs as well as diversifying production to support the policy's objectives[24] (JIS 2013). The implementation of Jamaica's National Food and Nutrition Security Policy will also underpin the government's efforts to reduce the food import bill (Jamaica Gleaner 2013).

Guyana's approach to food and nutrition security is encapsulated in an FNS strategy and addresses the *"plan of action directed at improving the food situation of the country and its people, especially for the target populations facing any given levels of food security".* (Govt of Guyana 2011). Unlike many of its regional counterparts, Guyana is a net exporter of food, but is still challenged by some elements of food and nutrition (in)security, particularly as it relates to access to food and quality of nutrition. While some of the objectives of this strategy involve creating income-earning opportunities and ensuring food is safe and nutritious for all its people, the overall mandate is to *"improve the health and well-being of all persons living in Guyana through enhanced FNS"*. The strategy will address FNS concerns of the whole population but specific attention will be paid to poor and otherwise vulnerable sections of the population. The strategy outlines a three-goal approach to achieving food security:

1. To facilitate sustainable and stable employment-generating opportunities that would increase availability of and accessibility to food, especially among vulnerable groups.
2. To promote systems (information, education and communication/dissemination) for use and consumption of healthy foods for increased nutrition of all Guyanese and especially vulnerable groups
3. Promote increased institutional coordination and functioning for improved food and nutrition security.

This strategy is not intended to stand alone, but to be integrated into current and future policy documents for Guyana, towards the sustainability and development of the country's economy.

In Trinidad and Tobago, while there is not an explicit FNS policy it is subsumed in the country's National Food Production Action plan 2012-2015. This plan is based on a 5-pronged mandate, namely:

1. To reduce the food import bill;
2. To further reduce inflation, primarily driven by food prices
3. To create sustainable, long-term productive employment;
4. To contribute to the diversification of the economy; and
5. To increase the country's food security.

The plan states that the governments overarching goal is "to create a food secure nation". This addresses the government's intention to increase local production and ensure that citizens have access to quality i.e. safe and nutritious – affordable foods in sufficient quantities in an effort to achieve FNS, and in so doing, provide an attractive, profitable livelihood for all producers. While the strategy embraces the need for a multi-sectoral approach to FNS, there is a strong focus on the strengthening of the agriculture sector

[24] http://www.jis.gov.jm/news/leads/34535

through the sustainable increase of local production. This will not only develop the sector, but will reduce the food import bill. This strategy will align with other national priorities to achieve national, economic and social development.

Other regional governments have also formulated or begun to formulate FNS policies and action plans, namely Grenada[25] and Dominica[26]. These national strategies, coupled with the RFNSP and RFNSAP are indicative of the region's commitment to ensure its food and nutrition security. While the results of these are yet to be realized, it is certainly a positive step to have such policies in place with clear action plans and strategies to guide the implementation process.

In addition to these FNS strategies and policies, there is also the suggestion of a "Food Replacement Strategy". This particular strategy "involves the systematic replacement of foods from the import basket with those from the indigenous food sector" (Paul 2008). Proponents of this strategy admit this is no easy feat but will require involvement from an array of national, regional international, as well as governmental and non-governmental involvement. It will also require a re-orienting of tastes and preferences and a re-directing of behavior not only in favour, but in priority of, local foods and products (Paul 2008). Neil Paul in the working paper, Options for a Food Replacement Strategy in the Context of Rising Food Prices and Food Security, contends the region's populations must be sensitized to the health benefits of eating local fruit and vegetables, as well as the economic importance of reducing the food import bills (2008). Moreover the region must move away from the old approach of primary production into value-added strategies which promote innovation and development of agri-products. This may necessitate a move away from the concept of agriculture in limited spaces such as 'backyard gardening" etc into newer concepts of urban gardening, or city agriculture – which involves the use of empty lots within the city limits for production of food.

Such an approach must also be handled carefully in light of WTO trade obligations as it must not discriminate against imports from trading partners. Paul points out that even within this WTO context there is still some policy space which can allows some members to employ measures in the interest of food security and the protection of the environment. He refers to the preamble to the AoA *"…that reform of trade in agriculture should be made in an equitable way among members having regard to non-trade concerns, including food security and the need to protect the environment."* (WTO 1999). Even with this premise, this strategy will not be easy, but can be successful if all facets on society and economy work and commit to the overall objective of food security.

[25] See http://www.gov.gd/egov/news/2012/nov12/28_11_12/item_6/grenada_action_plan_nutrition_security_developed.html

[26] See http://dominicanewsonline.com/news/homepage/news/economy-development/dnfc-addresses-factors-affecting-food-security-in-dominica/

Concluding Remarks

Food and nutrition security is a central challenge for CARICOM countries. This is made even more complex in light of the region's multilateral trade obligations. The nature of these agreements is such that the WTO AoA and the EPA have the ability to address the issue for good or ill. While it was hoped that such agreements would increase CARICOM share in global agriculture trade; the requirements of trade liberalization essentially means an influx of cheap imports resulting in changes in welfare in favour of domestic consumers but not so for domestic producers. Concerns over the potential impact of Agreements on food security relate to the inability of domestic production in these nations to compete with agri-food imports from their developed trade partners, the restrictions imposed on CARICOM governments to address import surges that could undermine local food production, and the limitations on the freedom of CARICOM countries to use tariff policy and market regulation more generally to promote the domestic supply of staple foods.

It therefore makes sense the one of the first actions any regional government takes is to stimulate economic growth and encourage investments. This would require a transformation of the agricultural industry and by extension the manufacturing industry. The success of this initiative depends largely on the level of collaboration and investment from the private sector. The role of such investors and entrepreneurs have an important role to play both in investing in new tools to increase productivity but also in bring crops to market, both locally and regionally. As stated earlier there is an urgent need for Caribbean agriculture and food producers not only to boost primary production but to improve into more value-added processes. It is therefore critical that domestic initiatives be put in place to ensure that agriculture can play its role as an engine of growth and poverty reduction. Small-scale farmers need access to modern inputs, resources and technologies – such as high-quality seeds, fertilisers, feed and farming tools and equipment – that will allow them to boost productivity and production. This requires investment in agriculture, rather than trade restrictions. Requiring consumers to pay high prices simply to maintain an unproductive agriculture is not a sustainable strategy to improve food security. The potential of trade agreements to improve food security can only be realised by a focus on greater agricultural investment and improved institutions (Matthews 2010).

Secondly, the region's governments must find meaningful ways of capitalizing on the various trade agreements not only for issues of market access, but in the interest of food security concerns. It must no longer be an option to continue trading as usual to the detriment of the nation's food security without taking a firm position on the issue with the view to improve it in a sustainable way. At this point such action may require using the flexibilities outlined above under either the WTO AoA or those in the EPA. That said, which ever flexibility is employed to achieve food security, governments must take a unyielding position in the country's interest even at the risk of a fall-out in the multilateral trading arena.

Finally there must be an immediate reframing of the treatment of food security in multilateral trade arena such that policies to achieve food security are not considered as trade distorting but as principle objectives of agriculture trade policy. This requires an explicit recognition that market-determined outcomes do not necessarily improve food security and that the purpose of agricultural trade rules should be to facilitate food security-enhancing policies, even though this may require limiting the pace of trade liberalization in some sectors and/or granting States additional policy flexibility in pursuit of international recognized food security objectives (de Schutter 2011)

For CARICOM countries food security must be placed as priority in any and all trade agreements. The issue is made even more urgent in light of the impact of trade obligations particularly trade liberalization on the region's escalating food import bill, which incidentally in correlated with the rise in non-communicable diseases across the region. What is equally as urgent however, is the urgency with increased and improved production be conducted in the agriculture and agri-food sectors. It is now more imperative than ever that food security be considered foremost a domestic policy that should increase supply and foster innovation and productivity in all areas affecting the establishment and maintenance of food security (Diaz-Bonilla *et al*., 2000).

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