

A food regime perspective on the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between EU and ACP: locking-in neoliberalism under the guise of development

ÖFSE conference paper: EU Trade Policy at the Crossroads: between economic liberalism and democratic challenges

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Key Words

Economic Partnership Agreement, Food Regime, Food Sovereignty, Trade Regime

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ABSTRACT

This paper puts the EPAs in the context of the international trade regime (especially the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) and TRIPS), the shift from the Lomé Convention to the Cotonou Agreement, as well as EU geopolitics and growth strategies, notably Lisbon/Europe 2020 and Global Europe – exposing the neoliberal agenda behind these so-called Partnership Agreements. The shift to bilateralism is a clear result of the Doha standstill, which allows the EU to pursue a ‘WTO-Plus’ agenda, reflecting both the material and ideational interests of the EU. The fact that these provisions are an integral part not only of the EU’s more commercial FTAs but also of the EPAs is problematic and stands in contrast to the original Global Europe discourse, whereby the EPAs were formulated to meet development rather than trade objectives. There is thus a convergence of commercial and development trade policy. Brussels is trying to ‘lock in’ neoliberalism across the seven ACP regions, meaning regulatory regimes are created in order to consolidate neoliberal reforms which reduce the policy space for alternative development strategies. The EU has aligned its policies with the Post-Washington Consensus, claiming its main goal is poverty reduction by following the international consensus on the benefits of free trade for development. Yet, the inclusion of the Singapore issues in the EPAs reflects a fundamental shift in EU trade policy towards a more aggressive approach of penetrating overseas markets.

Based on this contextualization, and keeping other core characteristics of the corporate food regime in mind, namely the continued inequality in government support for agricultural systems between the Global South and North, as well as the increased industrialization pressures on the Global South, the paper briefly introduces detrimental effects of the EPAs on African societies and economies from a food regime perspective. It mentions numerous, interconnected, devastating social, economic, political, cultural and ecological effects of the EPAs, to then go into more detail on the connection between simultaneous agricultural export and food import dependencies and food crises.

Finally, after exposing the hypocrisy of the development discourse surrounding the EPAs, the paper suggests trade alternatives that are conducive to food sovereignty and its social, economic, cultural and ecological development aspects. In order to ensure food sovereignty sustainably, a paradigm shift towards agro-ecological small-scale farming is proposed, in combination with a relaxation of liberalization pressures on developing countries, and especially LDCs. The solution most beneficial to the ACP states in terms of national welfare, as well as regional trade, could be the extension of a GSP-plus scheme to all ACPs instead of negotiating EPAs. Additionally, a ‘development box’ should be introduced in the WTO’s AoA.

Overall, trade agreements between unequal partners conducive to development are non-reciprocal, protect and promote national and regional markets and producers, provide the required policy space to follow own development trajectories, do not push for liberalization in either goods nor services, resist privatization pressures in the context of intellectual property, and do not include the WTO-plus or Singapore issues. The EPAs do not follow these principles; instead, they can be seen as EU instruments for the hegemonic implementation of neoliberal strategies – in a wider context of geopolitics, security, and economic as well as ideational concerns – while the international trade regime and the WTO liberalization logic serve the EU to legitimize them.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since 2002, the EU has been negotiating so-called Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with 7 ACP regions, i.e. with African, Caribbean and Pacific states. Negotiations were originally planned to last only until 2007 when comprehensive regional agreements were supposed to be reached. However, due to the resistance of the alleged ‘partners’ in the Global South negotiations are still ongoing, albeit a large number of interim multilateral and bilateral agreements have been introduced and in the last few years, since the conclusion of the first comprehensive EPA with CARIFORUM, the pace of negotiations appears to be picking up. This paper exposes the hypocrisy behind the development discourse surrounding the EPAs and reveals the neoliberal agenda behind the EU’s ambitions with the EPAs. The core of the paper puts the EPA’s into the context of the international trade and food regime as well as the EU’s geopolitical strategies. Based on this contextualization, the current state of the EPAs is illustrated, followed by a brief introduction of a series of detrimental effects of the EPAs and the regimes in which they are embedded, with a focus on the negative effects of food import and agricultural export dependencies for the Global South. The paper is concluded with some ideas on alternative ways to organize agricultural systems and the agricultural trade regime in order to ensure the human right to food.

1.1. THE INTERNATIONAL FOOD REGIME

Food regime analysis is a relatively new field that “combines political economy, political ecology and historical analysis to explain how particular relations of food production and consumption are central to the functioning and reproduction of global capitalism.” (Holt-Giménez, Shattuck 2011: 110). A food regime is “a rule governed structure of production and consumption of food on a world scale” (ibid), or the interplay of regulation and accumulation processes.

Generally three global food regimes are distinguished (see Table 1): the first one was characterized by a fuelling of industrialization in Europe by imports of cheap food and agricultural commodities (and raw materials) from the tropical and temperate settler colonies. The second food regime “reversed the flow of food from South to North [and] was characterized by the global spread of industrial agriculture through the ‘Green Revolution’ [...]” (ibid).

Table 1: Global Development of Agri-Systems 1800-2010

	Proto-Globalization	Globalization Regulated By Colonial State	Globalization Regulated by Industrial States	Market-Regulated ('Neoliberal') Globalization
Time Period	1800-1870/90	1870/90-1930/50	1930/50-1970/90	since 1970/90
Metabolism	solar energy based, agricultural	transition to industrial regime	fossil fuel based, industrial	transition to 'postindustrial' regime?
Growth	labor intensive	extensive (settler colonies)	capital intensive	flexible
Organization	entrepreneurial (agricultural capitalism)	farmer-based (without economies of scale)	farmer-based / collectivized (with economies of scale)	entrepreneurial/ farmer based
Product	grains	grains, meat	grains, meat, processed foods	industrially processed and organic products

Commodity Chain	meeting demand of urban-industrial centres	exports from settler colonies to Europe	subsidized export of oversupply from industrialized countries	segmentation of world market based on quantity/quality
Regulation	regional / national	nation state / international	nation state / international	supranational (EU) / global (TNCs & WTO)
Discourse / Policy	liberal	protectionist	dirigiste	(neo-)liberal

Source: based on Langthaler 2010: 162.

The third, or corporate food regime is the focus of this paper. It's characteristics are the consolidation of the neoliberal trade regime as evidenced by for instance the EPAs; the persisting large inequalities in government support for agricultural systems between the Global North and the Global South, indicated for instance through the fact the largest share of the EU's budget has for decades gone into the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and the increasing industrialization pressure on agricultural systems, for instance exerted by AGRA, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (Weinzierl 2014). In the context of neo-liberal capitalist expansion, this regime is characterized by a supranational and global regulation structure, starting with the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in the 1980s. These "reflected the growing sway of market fundamentalism in the most powerful developed countries" (Havnevik et al. 2007: 16) as they "broke down tariffs, dismantled national marketing boards, eliminated price guarantees and destroyed national agricultural research and extension systems in the Global South." (Holt-Giménez, Shattuck 2011: 111). The SAPs furthermore led to the neglect of African agriculture, and investment in smallholders' productivity was abandoned for three decades, as still evident in the low productivity rates and high food insecurity of African smallholders today (Havnevik et al. 2007: 37ff) The establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995 and the connected Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) "institutionalized the process of agricultural liberalization on a global scale by restricting the rights of sovereign states to regulate food and agriculture." (ibid). Today these policies are further embedded in international treaties and bilateral or multilateral free trade agreements, such as the EPAs.

Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011: 111) concisely sum up the most problematic aspects of this neoliberal food regime: "unprecedented market power and profits of monopoly agrifood corporations, globalized animal protein chains, growing links between food and fuel economies, a 'supermarket revolution', liberalized global trade in food, increasingly concentrated land ownership, a shrinking natural resource base, and growing opposition from food movements worldwide". They furthermore offer an analytical framework contextualizing different perspectives on the current food regime and its various crises, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: A Food Regime / Food Movements Framework

	Corporate Food Regime		Food Movements	
Politics	Neoliberal	Reformist	Progressive	Radical
Discourse	Food Enterprise	Food Security	Food Justice	Food Sovereignty
Main Institutions	International Finance Corporation (World Bank); IMF; WTO; USDA; USAID; GAFSP; Green Revolution/CGIAR; Millennium Challenge; Global Harvest; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Cargill; Monsanto; ADM; Tyson; Carrefour; Tesco; Wal-Mart	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank); FAO; HLTF; CFA; CGIAR; IFAP; mainstream Fair Trade; Slow Food; some Food Policy Councils; Worldwatch; OXFAM-AMERICA; CARE; Feeding America and most food banks and food aid programs	CFS; Alternative Fair Trade & many Slow Foods chapters; many organizations in the Community Food Security Movement; CSAs; many Food Policy Councils & youth food and justice movements; Coalition of Immokalee Workers and other farmworker & labor organizations	Via Campesina and other agrarian-based farmers' movements (ROPPA, EAFF, ESAFF); International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty; ATTAC; World March of Women; and many Food Justice and rights-based movements
Orientation	Corporate/Global market	Development/Aid	Empowerment	Entitlement/Redistribution
Model	Overproduction; corporate concentration; unregulated markets and monopolies; monocultures (including organic); GMOs; agrofuels; mass global consumption of industrial food; phasing out of peasant & family agriculture and local retail	Mainstreaming/certification of niche markets (e.g. organic, fair, local, sustainable); maintaining northern agricultural subsidies; 'sustainable' roundtables for agrofuels, soy, forest products, etc; market-led land reform; microcredit	Agroecologically-produced local food; investment in underserved communities; new business models and community benefit packages for production, processing & retail; better wages for ag. workers; solidarity economies; land access; regulated markets & supply	Dismantle corporate agri-foods monopoly power; parity; redistributive land reform; community rights to water & seed; regionally-based food systems; democratization of food system; sustainable livelihoods; protection from dumping/overproduction; revival of agroecologically-managed peasant agriculture to distribute wealth and cool the planet
Approach to the food crisis	Increased industrial production; unregulated corporate monopolies; land grabs; expansion of GMOs; public-private partnerships; liberal markets; microenterprise; international sourced food aid; GAFSPF – The Global Agriculture and Food Security Program	Same as neoliberal but with increased middle peasant production & some locally-sourced food aid; microcredit; more agricultural aid, but tied to GMOs & 'bio-fortified/ climate-resistant' crops; Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA)	Right to food; better safety nets; sustainably produced, locally sourced food; agroecologically-based agricultural development; Committee on World Food Security (CFS)	Human right to food; locally sourced, sustainably produced, culturally appropriate, democratically controlled; focus on UN/FAO negotiations
Key documents	World Bank 2008 Development Report	World Bank 2008 Development Report	IAASTD	Declaration of Nyelení ; Peoples' comprehensive framework for action to eradicate hunger; ICAARD; UN Declaration of Peasant Rights; IAASTD

Source: Holt-Giménez, Shattuck 2011: 117f.

1.2. THE INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL TRADE REGIME

1.2.1. THE GATT URUGAY ROUND

The EPAs are to be seen in the context of a general trend of the liberalization of trade in the second half of the 20th century.

The 1947 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was an agreement to reduce tariffs in many sectors, but not in agriculture: the GATT provisions regarding agricultural trade were a reaction of the signatory members, agricultural exporters such as the USA, Australia, Brazil and many European countries, to dropping prices, and the realization that a multilateral effort needed to be made in order to protect the signatories' agricultural sectors. Initially the idea was therefore not to liberalize agricultural trade, but, on the contrary, to implement a framework that would allow countries to take protectionist measures such as import tariffs. However, protectionist policies were tied to the condition that production levels and exports were controlled. (Choplin, Strickner, Trouvé 2011: 35). Such production controls are the only guaranteed way of eliminating overproduction (Weinzierl 2014). This, however, all changed with the beginning of the Uruguay round in 1986, when agriculture was put on the trade liberalizing agenda of GATT. It marked the discursive shift from food being perceived as a human necessity in need of protection, to a commodity like any other, which still feeds neoliberal discourse and the idea of trade as an 'end' in itself today. (Pérez-Vitoria 2005: 126; Bové, Dufour 2001: 210, 213; Murphy 2010: 104)

1.2.2. THE WTO'S AGREEMENT ON AGRICULTURE AND TRIPS

With the creation of the WTO, the AoA came into effect and put the liberalization of agriculture on top of the agenda.

The provisions of the AoA forced the signatories to convert all non-tariff barriers into a tariff equivalent and reduce all tariffs by 36 percent within 6 years or by 24 percent within 10 years for developed and developing countries respectively; the so-called Least Developed Countries (LDCs) were not required to make any reduction commitments (Stockbridge/Oxfam 2006: 18).

The agreement also required WTO members to allow a minimum of 5 percent of a countries' internal demand of any agricultural product to be met by imports at reduced tariffs (Bové, Dufour 2001: 216f). Through this minimum import rule WTO-members are effectively denied a strategy of food self-sufficiency in line with food sovereignty (McMichael 2010: 59). Countries furthermore agreed to reduce their subsidized exports by 21 percent in terms of quantity and by 36 percent in terms of value. This resulted in considerable reductions of price support measures. Since the AoA, a country can furthermore only restrict the import of a product if it can prove to WTO-picked experts that the product in question poses a threat to human or animal health. (Bové, Dufour 2001: 214, 216)

According to mainstream discourse, the purpose of the AoA was to discontinue the dumping practices of the US and the EU, while improving developing countries' access to their markets via the reduction in tariffs (Strickner 2009: 227). In reality, however, the way these provisions were designed they effectively led to the opening of markets in the so-called developing countries, while the EU could legally continue to keep high tariffs especially in those products that were domestically produced, known as 'sensitive products'. These sensitive products, however, largely affect the exports of ACP countries, so that today some of the ACP states face on average higher EU tariffs than the rest of the world (Fontagné, Labord and Mitaritonna 2010: 185).

This way the EU (and other so-called industrialized countries) protected their own markets, while increasing possibilities to exploit those of countries with weaker negotiating powers, which were forced to give up protectionist instruments (Strickner 2009: 227).

“In practice, the AoA legitimized the use of subsidies in developed countries that distort world markets and damage the local markets of developing countries – reducing the options available to developing countries that are interested in protecting rural livelihoods and domestic food security (let alone food sovereignty). The potential of agriculture to eradicate poverty and contribute to a biodiverse, ecologically healthy, and socially just food system is dramatically curtailed” (Murphy 2010: 112f)

The AoA furthermore played directly into the hands of the agricultural trade and processing industries, as the first version of the AoA was drafted by former executives of Cargill and ADM (Murphy 2010: 109; Strickner 2009: 227). Therefore, the AoA's provisions reinforce the industrialization of agricultural systems: “The AoA presupposes a particular model for agriculture and reinforces that model through the rules it establishes. It is a model for wealthy countries pursuing industrial agriculture, and for developing country governments that wish to follow suit. It ignores the needs and interests of billions of farmers who do not live in that world.” (Murphy 2010: 112).

The WTO's definition of dumping is contested by farmers' organizations such as Via Campesina, which define dumping as the practice of selling goods on foreign markets below their production costs. This definition exposes the EU exporting processes as dumping and best suits reality (Weinzierl 2014). But according to the WTO, dumping is the selling of products on foreign markets below the domestic market price (Choplin, Strickner, Trouvé 2011: 52). Therefore current EU policies and practices are largely perceived as legal, as the 1992 reform of the CAP substituted product support with direct payments and the 2003 reform decoupled these payments from production, causing the EU price to move towards the world market price (Weinzierl 2014).

In more detail, the AoA introduced three so-called boxes. The amber box includes market distorting instruments, as were used in the EU prior to 1992. The blue box is comprised of subsidizing mechanisms that are not completely decoupled from production or prices, such as the CAP payments after 1992. Members have to discontinue using the distorting instruments of these two boxes and all subsidization instruments used should be part of the third, green box: it includes those subsidies that are perceived to be non-distorting in WTO-discourse, such as the decoupled EU direct payments since 2003. (Morgan, Marsden, Murdoch 2006: 31; Choplin, Strickner, Trouvé 2011: 50f; Weinzierl 2014)

Another crucial WTO agreement relevant to agricultural trade is TRIPS, the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. Also signed in 1995, it requires WTO members to introduce certain standards of patent protection by 2005, although LDCs were granted an extension to implement the agreement by 2016. TRIPS is the culmination of a trend of the commodification of the content of human intellectual activity and its dissemination (Eimer, Schüren 2013: 4). It can be regarded “as the codification of powerful interests' preferences in industrialised countries that succeeded in imposing their perspective on the relationship between ideas and property on a global scale” (ibid) and – although there are certain legal flexibilities and the national implementation process depends on the strength of civil society actors and the ability of TNCs (transnational corporations) to forge partnerships with domestic pressure groups – it curtails the signing members' policy space, as does any trade agreement.

TRIPS is relevant in an agricultural context as it enables large corporations in seed development (p.e. Monsanto) to protect 'their' intellectual property rights, which is especially problematic in the case of hybrid seeds and GMOs (genetically modified organisms). In this way, it enables biopiracy, the process by which corporations can make naturally occurring biodiversity and traditional knowledge 'their own',

and in turn it potentially illegalizes the use of these substances by indigenous peoples who might have been using them for centuries p.e. as natural remedies (Bové, Dufour 2011: 139; Shiva 2004: 119f; Navdanya 2009).

1.2.3. THE DOHA STALEMATE

The WTO Doha Round starting in 2001 is also known as the 'development round'. This development rhetoric is explained by the background of the MDGs (Millenium Development Goals) and the widely held belief that trade was more important than aid in meeting these goals related to poverty eradication. But this developmental focus of the Doha Round is also explained by the fact that developing countries wanted to push the EU and the USA to deliver on their Uruguay Round commitments, especially regarding the removal of trade barriers in agriculture (and also textiles) (Morgan, Marsden, Murdoch 2006: 28f). To this end, developing countries brought in around 100 suggestions to fix the problems that arose during the implementation of GATT; these, however, were never picked up by their more powerful negotiating partners.

Another concern brought in by developing countries was the need for a stronger commitment to the WTO principle of 'special and differential treatment' (SDT), which would benefit the LDCs (Groth, Kneifel 2007: 15). The SDT provision was designed under GATT "to acknowledge a major shortcoming of universal trade rules: the fact that they treat unequals equally" (Morgan, Marsden, Murdoch 2006: 35). The history of the idea of special and differential treatment of the developing countries goes back to 1961, when a GATT ministerial meeting called for a 'sympathetic attitude' regarding the reciprocity rule; four years later a substantial exception to reciprocity was adopted in GATT Part IV until, finally, in 1971, a waiver was adopted which was necessary to ensure compliance for non-reciprocal unilateral preference programs. This waiver was eventually institutionalized in the 1979 Enabling Clause, which still shapes WTO negotiations today and generally serves as the basis of the developing countries' demands. (Dicaprio, Trommer 2010: 1615)

Under this SDT umbrella, developing countries suggested the introduction of a fourth WTO box called the Development Box, which would place the developmental needs of developing countries' societies, and especially those of poor farmers, in the center of WTO agricultural trade negotiations. These demands were resisted successfully by the US and the EU: "A Development Box is clearly a challenge to the system of 'agribusiness imperialism', in which the US is seeking to become a 'breadbasket of the world' through the global reach of its agri-food multinationals" (ibid). Due to this resistance to a Development Box, developing countries have restricted their proposals to greater flexibility on the so-called 'special products', crucial to rural development and food security (the developing countries' equivalent of the developed countries 'sensitive products'). But even these restricted demands have been denied so far by the more powerful countries, again indicating that the Doha Round's developmental discourse is not reflected in actions and real commitments. (ibid)

The 'Doha Development Agenda', formulated in the Doha Ministerial Declaration of 2001 is quite ambiguous and leaves a lot of room for interpretation (Morgan, Marsden, Murdoch 2006: 29). Critics contend that the development discourse of the Doha Round is hardly credible, as the demands of EU and USA play into the hands of (Western) agribusiness, while destroying small-scale farmers' livelihoods in the Global South. Instead of taking the demands made by developing countries into account, the EU and USA effectively managed to turn the so-called development round into a marketization round (Groth, Kneifel 2007: 15).

Eventually the Doha Round negotiations failed in 2006 and have been at a standstill ever since – because the US and EU refused to further lower their agricultural subsidies and instead insisted on

further liberalization of agricultural markets not just in other ‘developed’, but also in the emerging and developing countries (ibid: 14).

It can be expected that the Doha Round negotiations can only be concluded if agreement is reached over the utilization of tariffs on ‘special’ and ‘sensitive products’ and the number of commodities defined as such. As the AoA severely restricted the use of non-tariff barriers, this is the only viable policy option left for developing countries. (Stockbridge/Oxfam 2006: 18f) However, even the use of such exclusion lists of ‘sensitive’ and ‘special products’ for developing and developed countries, respectively, is problematic, especially if these lists are too restrictive and there is room for substitution of these protected products by other commodities imported at dumping prices (Weinzierl 2014). In this case exclusion lists are an inadequate instrument to protect local farmers from displacement, and they certainly remain inferior to the concept of a Development Box.

1.3. EU GEOPOLITICS

1.3.1. LISBON STRATEGY & GLOBAL EUROPE

The structure of the EPAs is of course not only shaped by the international agricultural trade regime (especially AoA and TRIPS), but also by the EU's geopolitics and growth strategies, notably Lisbon/Europe 2020 and Global Europe.

The Lisbon Strategy was formulated in 2000 with the goal of turning the EU into the most competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economic area by 2010 (Groth, Kneifel 2007: 38), clearly following the growth and productivity paradigm. It was in its essence reformulated in the Europe 2020 strategy, which superseded the Lisbon Agenda in 2010, although with an additional focus on environmental sustainability, i.e. promoting the concept of ‘Green Growth’ (EC 2010).

The growth objectives postulated in the Lisbon Agenda/Europe 2020 Strategy are complemented by the EU's foreign trade strategy Global Europe, which was formulated in 2006 and aims at improving the EU's competitiveness on a global scale (EC 2006). This is to be achieved via the conclusion of a large number of bilateral FTAs (Free Trade Agreements), promoting free trade, or in particular the securing of access to raw materials, a stronger presence of European corporations in emerging markets, the liberalization of lucrative markets for public procurement, and the tearing down of non-tariff barriers such as environmental and labor law standards (Groth, Kneifel 2007: 39; Choplin, Strickner, Trouvé 2011: 58ff). This shift to bilateralism is a clear result of the Doha standstill, which allows the EU to pursue a ‘WTO-Plus’ agenda, reflecting both the material and ideational interests of the EU (Hurt 2012): the EPAs especially can be seen as a result of the EU's loss of market shares (Fritz 2011: 11, 51) while at the same time neoliberalism is effectively locked-in in developing areas (Hurt 2012). WTO-Plus refers to the so-called Singapore issues, whereby liberalization in services and investment, as well as intellectual property rights are promoted by the so-called developed countries. These issues were an integral part of the Doha Round, but were abandoned due to concerted efforts of the developing countries and the collapse of the Cancún Conference in 2003 (Heron, Siles-Brügge 2012: 250). Heron and Siles-Brügge conclude (2012) that this shift towards provisions of bilateral agreements that go beyond WTO requirements is due to domestic-societal and systemic drivers, notably the power of the services industry lobby. Regional and bilateral FTAs, including the EPAs can then be seen as “a reflection of the trade preferences of multinational firms seeking to secure ‘first-mover’ advantages in highly regulated service markets” (Heron, Siles-Brügge 2012: 251). The fact that these provisions are an integral part not only of the EU's more commercial FTAs (for instance the EU-Korea FTA, or the envisioned EU-India FTA) but also of the EPAs is problematic and stands in contrast

to the original Global Europe discourse, whereby the EPAs were formulated to meet development rather than trade objectives (ibid: 257f; Sharma 2009). Heron and Siles-Brügge identify a convergence of commercial and 'development' trade policy here, and contend that the inclusion of the Singapore issues in the EPAs reflects "a fundamental shift in EU trade policy built on a more aggressive approach towards penetrating overseas markets" (Heron, Siles-Brügge 2012: 255).

The halt of the Doha Round, however, not only caused the EU to pressure developing countries into signing bilateral trade agreements; FTAs are surging on a global scale and increasingly involve policies that led to the breakdown of the Doha negotiations in the first place. These FTAs are modeled after North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the FTA between the US and Mexico that was signed in 1992 which "established a new paradigm in terms of what FTAs could achieve for TNCs" (bilaterals.org, BIOTHAI and GRAIN 2008: 10; Oxfam 2002: 234).

In conclusion, the EPAs, and FTAs in general can be understood as EU instruments for the implementation of neoliberal strategies, to be seen in a wider context of geopolitics, security, and economic as well as ideational concerns, while the international trade regime and the WTO liberalization logic serve the EU to legitimize them.

1.3.2. EU-ACP RELATIONS: FROM LOMÉ TO COTONOU

EU-ACP relations are regulated by the Cotonou Agreement, signed in 2000.

It superseded the Lomé Convention, which granted preferential access to the EU market to ACP countries unilaterally, i.e. one-sidedly. While Lomé I was signed in and by 46 ACP states and nine EC members, it underwent three revisions until Lomé IV had an increased membership of 77 ACP states and the EU-15 (Kneifel, Groth 2007: 16f). The main characteristic of Lomé was that it went beyond aid as it coupled it with *unilateral* trade preferences. Lomé therefore addressed the structural problems that arise from trade partnerships between unequal partners.

This preferential treatment of ACP countries was eroded after the creation of the WTO and in the context of globalization, with the EU turning towards more lucrative markets of South East Asia, Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean (ibid: 19f). The preferences ACP countries enjoyed under Lomé were abandoned with the Cotonou Agreement; a shift that was legitimized with the argument of lacking WTO-compatibility under Lomé provisions. One of Cotonou's explicit main goals, on the other hand, is the gradual transition of ACP states into the global economy in a WTO-compatible way, to be achieved by the tearing down of preferences formerly granted, and by the conclusion of WTO-compatible, i.e. reciprocal FTAs between the EU and ACP regions. In this context the EPA negotiations were started in 2002 with the goal of concluding comprehensive EPAs with all ACP regions by 2007. Given the ACP countries' concern that these EPAs would reduce benefits they previously enjoyed, this envisioned deadline had to be pushed back several times and negotiations are still on-going. (FAO 2006: 1)

The relations between EU and ACP states are furthermore governed by the Everything But Arms (EBA) initiative, decided by the EU council in 2001, which provides full duty-free access for LDCs for all goods except arms and ammunitions (EC 2013). Bananas, rice and sugar – some of the most important export commodities for developing countries – were exempted from this initiative in the beginning, but phased out by 2009. However, certain constraints remain, considering the EU's non-tariff barriers Rules of Origin (RoO) and SPS measures. The former pose a threat to developing countries' exports as for EBA to apply, all phases of production would have to be situated in LDCs, which is often not the case in a globalized production chain. These RoO are so complex and restrictive, that many LDCs, especially those in Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA), opt to export under the less generous Cotonou scheme

instead of the EBA preferences, as the RoO of Cotonou are sufficiently less restrictive to compensate for the loss in preferential access. SPS on the other hand arise from quickly changing food safety standards of the EU that effectively discriminate against small-scale production and incur high administrative costs. (Hinkle, Schiff/World Bank 2004: 1324; FAO 2006: 60ff; Echessah 2007: 530ff). Additionally, as this is a voluntary concession by the EU, problems associated with the EBA initiative are the same as with the Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP), which grants preferential access to developing countries on a less comprehensive level (only limited range of products, not duty-free but at reduced tariffs, to be phased out whereas EBA applies as long as a country is classified as LDC): neither the GSP nor the EBA is contractual and can therefore be changed by the EU at will. (FAO 2006: 52)

2. CURRENT STATE OF EPAS

2.1. CONTENT OF EPAS

The EPAs apply primarily to merchandise trade, but, as discussed above, the EU is pushing for the inclusion of the ‘Singapore Issues’, or trade-related aspects such as services and investment. Contrary to the EU’s development rhetoric concerning free trade, however, the benefits for the ACP are questionable at best: the EPAs provide for only limited improvements to ACP access to the EU market, as the LDCs already enjoy duty-free access under EBA but also because the Cotonou agreement provides free access with only a limited number of exceptions. “The most that the ACP could negotiate would be the removal of these exceptions. By definition, therefore, the agreements [EPAs] will be asymmetrical in the sense that many ACP countries will change their trade policy relatively more than the EU” (FAO 2006: 47f). At the same time, however, ACP signatories of an EPA are required to open their markets to EU goods by removing ‘substantially all’ quantitative restrictions, tariffs on goods imports, and charges having equivalent effects over a transition period. (FAO 2006: 47)

The difference of the EPAs to previous arrangements under Lomé is threefold: first of all the configuration of state groups on the ACP side, whereby the ACP no longer negotiates as the totality of the ACP bloc, but as individual countries or country groupings. Secondly, as explained above, the content of the EPAs stands in stark contrast to previous agreements as they are based on WTO-compatible, reciprocal trade liberalization as opposed to unilateral preferences granted by the EU. And thirdly, the EPAs differ in their duration, as they are permanent FTAs while previous unilateral concessions were time limited. (FAO 2006: 10)

2.2. PROGRESS MADE IN NEGOTIATIONS

Table 3 provides an overview of the state of negotiations in the seven ACP regions that were defined specifically for the EPA process. For a long time the only comprehensive regional EPA that has been concluded, was the EPA with CARIFORUM, but significant progress has been made over the past two/three years. Where no comprehensive regional agreements have been reached yet, interim agreements have been signed by a number of individual countries and also country groups within the regions to pave the way for the comprehensive regional agreements. The pace of liberalization commitments differs between these bilateral interim agreements (Küblböck, Forster 2008: 4).

Table 3: State of EPA Negotiations with the 7 ACP Regions

Region	Countries	Current Status
West Africa	Benin*, Burkina Faso*, Cape Verde, Gambia*, Ghana, Guinea*, Guinea-Bissau*, Ivory Coast, Liberia*, Mali*, Mauritania*, Niger*, Nigeria, Senegal*, Sierra Leone*, Togo*	Regional EPA: Negotiations were closed by Chief Negotiators in February 2014 in Brussels. In July 2014, ECOWAS Heads of State endorsed the EPA for signature. The signature process is currently ongoing. Bilateral interim EPAs , prior to the regional agreement: Côte d'Ivoire (signed in 2008; not ratified) and Ghana (not signed); both initialed in 2007.
Central Africa	Cameroon, Central African Republic*, Chad*, Congo (Brazzaville), Democratic Republic of Congo*, Equatorial Guinea*, Gabon, São Tomé & Príncipe*	Bilateral Interim EPA: Cameroon, signed in 2009. Entered into provisional application in August 2014. Regional EPA: progress has been made in 2014, negotiations currently delayed because of the situation in the Central African Republic.
Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA)	Comoros*, Djibouti*, Eritrea*, Ethiopia*, Malawi*, Madagascar*, Mauritius, Seychelles, Somalia*, Sudan*, Zambia*, Zimbabwe	Multilateral Interim EPA: Mauritius, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, Madagascar signed in 2009; provisionally applied since 2012; European Parliament gave consent in January 2013.
Eastern African Community (EAC)	Burundi*, Kenya, Rwanda*, Tanzania, Uganda*	Regional Interim EPA initialed in 2007 by Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya; Uganda; not signed or ratified yet due to resistance from EAC (Ministerial meeting in June 2010), significant progress since: deal concluded in October 2014, legal scrubbing completed in September 2015.
South African Development Community (SADC)	Angola*, Botswana, Lesotho*, Mozambique*, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland	Regional EPA: negotiations concluded in July 2014 after 10 years of negotiations (mainly due to South Africa's resistance). The EPA will replace multilateral interim EPA signed by Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique in 2009, never ratified (also initialed by Namibia, not signed)
Caribbean	Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti*, Jamaica, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, St Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago	Regional EPA signed by CARIFORUM in 2008, approved by EP in 2009: opens trade in services and goods and seeks to spur investment, sets up several joint institutions that meet regularly since 2010; CARIFORUM has to cut tariffs every two years on certain goods; both regions need to agree on monitoring system.
Pacific	Cook Islands, East Timor, Fiji, Kiribati*, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa*, Solomon Islands*, Tonga, Tuvalu*, Vanuatu*	Bilateral Interim EPA signed by Papua New Guinea, ratified in 2011; ratified by Fiji in May 2011, provisionally applied since July 2014. Regional EPA: progress made in 2013, but meetings not attended by Papua New Guinea and Fiji. "Commission is also ready to explore the possibility to widen the membership and deepen the content"

Source: EC (2015): Overview of EPA Negotiations. Updated September 2015.

* Least Developed Countries. Source: UN-OHRLS (2013).

2.3. WTO-CONFORMITY OF EPAS

Previous EU concessions to the ACP were WTO-compatible insofar as they were granted under a waiver, one of the three potential exceptions to the WTO Most Favored Nation (MFN) principle (GATT 1994 Article 1). This waiver was granted up until 2007, which was the main EU argument behind the 2007 deadline for the EPA negotiations. The possibility of a waiver is regulated in GATT Article XXV.5, but it required a three-quarter majority at the WTO. (Groth, Kneifel 2007: 25). The other two possibilities of MFN exemption are the WTO rule on regional trade agreements (RTAs), regulated by GATT Article XXIV, which recognizes voluntary agreements such as customs unions or FTAs and requires MFN only within these areas – this Article is the basis for the WTO legality of the EPAs; and the Enabling Clause of the Tokyo Round in 1979. The Enabling Clause is also known as SDT, the rule on special trading arrangements involving developing countries. SDT constitutes an exception from MFN rules in three ways: a) developed country tariff preferences for goods of developing country origin on GSP terms; b) special treatment for LDCs; and c) South-South preferences as an exception from both Articles I (on MFN treatment) and XXIV (on RTAs). (FAO 2006: 12) The Enabling Clause therefore does not apply as it only authorizes MFN exemptions for South-South RTAs, which is not the case in EPAs where the EU forms one of the parties. In other words, SDT cannot justify discriminatory preferences accorded to developing countries in the EPAs. (ibid: 21). Developing countries and even the LDCs within the seven ACP regions are therefore bound by GATT Article XXIV: 8b), which defines a free trade area as “a group of two or more customs territories in which the duties and other restrictive regulations of commerce [...] are eliminated on substantially all the trade” (FAO 2006: 17).

But exactly this treatment of unequal partners as equals – the relation between the ACP and the EU GNP is 1:31 (Groth, Kneifel 2007: 27) – is the core of the ongoing negotiations, as the EU promotes her own interests by insisting on Article XXIV, while the developing countries insist on turning the Cotonou development rhetoric into practice with the help of the Enabling Clause.

2.4. POWER ASYMMETRIES: THE INEQUITY OF TREATING UNEQUALS EQUALLY

The limited success developing countries had so far in promoting their developmental interests during the EPA negotiations is due to the vast power asymmetries between the EU and the ACP. The EU has, for instance, skillfully managed to include both LDCs and non-LDCs in all seven EPA regions, thereby eroding the LDC's previously enjoyed preferences under the EBA initiative (Groth, Kneifel 2007: 26). A study of the EU's relations to the ACP countries, including various policy instruments such as the Cotonou Agreement and the EPAs found that the EU's governance is not 'good', as generally there are large contradictions between rhetoric and practice leading to negative actual and potential impacts upon development in ACP states (Slocum-Bradley, Bradley 2010).

Critical voices contend that it is "only the asymmetry in power and negotiating abilities that enabled interim EPA's to be agreed" (Hurt 2012: 504). This is exemplified by the fact that the burden of adjustment will fall most heavily on the ACP and especially the LDCs, as the EPAs will not increase their market access to the EU, given the EBA initiative, but forces them to liberalize their EU imports. These asymmetries are furthermore illustrated by the EU's ability to include the 'Singapore Issues', or so-called WTO-Plus policies in spite of the strong opposition to them during the WTO Doha Round by developing countries. (ibid) The negotiation process furthermore reveals democratic deficiencies of the EPAs, as negotiations take place behind closed doors and do not include consultation, let alone participation of civil society organizations, and are furthermore not embedded in national democratic

processes. These problems of in-transparency are furthermore exacerbated by the narrow timeframe envisioned by the EU. (Küblböck, Forster 2008: 9)

Hurt (2012) furthermore illustrates that the EPA negotiations reflect not only the material but also the ideational interests of the EU: Brussels is trying to 'lock in' neoliberalism across the seven ACP regions, meaning regulatory regimes are created in order to consolidate neoliberal reforms which reduce the policy space for alternative development strategies: "To understand the pushing for the inclusion relationship with ACP states we must acknowledge that it operates within a context where the ideas of neoliberalism have become hegemonic." (Hurt 2012: 499). The EU has aligned its policies with the Post-Washington Consensus, claiming its main goal is poverty reduction by following the "international consensus on the benefits of free trade for development" (ibid).

WTO SDT rules include 145 separate considerations for developing countries and an additional 22 for LDCs (Dicaprio, Trommer 2010: 1614). As mentioned above, however, WTO legislation does not ensure that SDT provisions are applied in all FTAs, but only within South-South cooperation (FAO 2006: 12, 21). But this "reciprocity requirement of the WTO for any trade agreement involving at least one developed country partner" (Dicaprio, Trommer 2010: 1615) puts the developmental needs of developing countries, and especially those of LDCs in danger as they are now bound to eliminate "duties and other restrictive regulations of commerce [on] substantially all the trade" according to Article XXIV of the GATT, the rule on RTAs (FAO 2006: 17). Judging from the CARIFORUM EPA, the first comprehensive one concluded, the EU interprets this as the ACP states having to liberalize 91 percent of the tariff lines within 25 years (Dicaprio, Trommer 2010: 1616). Dicaprio and Trommer find that the CARIFORUM EPA "broadly preserves the SDT provisions that apply to all developing countries. However [...], there is significant negative modification to those provisions that apply only to LDCs" (ibid: 1614). The EPA, therefore, has a clearly detrimental effect on the LDCs, as all trading partners are treated as equally strong in economic terms, effectively removing the idea of SDT according to level of economic development. Herein lies the novelty of the EPAs compared to FTAs before: in the expansion of liberalization requirements to LDCs (ibid: 1616-1624). As a result, the LDCs will carry the heaviest burden of the EPAs, because they stand little to gain from them, due to the preferential access enjoyed under the EBA initiative discussed above, but have to make the highest concessions relative to their economic strength.

The geographic divide between losers and winners of the EPAs is clear: in 2005, UNECA, the UN Economic Commission for Africa, estimated the economic effects of the ECOWAS EPA, and the numbers cast doubt on developmental discourse underlying the agreements, as the winners of the EPA are clearly situated in the EU, while the losers are in Africa: the report estimated that France, Great Britain and Germany would gain 495, 318 and 291 Million USD respectively, while Ghana will lose 23 million USD, Nigeria 4.5 million, and Burkina Faso, Benin and Côte d'Ivoire 2.9, 2.7 and 1.8 million USD respectively (Küblböck, Forster 2008: 8).

Why then do ACP countries, and especially the LDCs among them, sign EPAs in the first place? Based on assumptions of rational choice, perfect information and relations void of power asymmetries, mainstream economic theory would conclude that these countries must benefit; otherwise they wouldn't sign. Laroche Dupraz and Postolle (2013) argue this might be true as African governments show an 'urban bias', and promote the well-being of the urban population rather than dealing with the marginalization of the rural poor. Certainly African states and their populations are not homogenous and there are of course power asymmetries within the countries in question. But political economists warn that positive short-term effects from increased market access are unlikely to outweigh the negative long-term effects on development, and that the reasons why developing countries sign FTAs

such as the EPAs are not clear-cut; instead, they paint a complex picture of economic constraints and power asymmetries on an international level.

Heron (2011), for instance, analyzes the motives of Caribbean states in signing the first comprehensive EPA, which even went beyond WTO-conformity in including the much contested Singapore-Issues, i.e. WTO-plus rules on services, investment, intellectual property and government procurement (Dicaprio, Trommer 2010: 1618), when all the other ACP countries so far have at most concluded goods-only interim agreements. One of the main reasons for the states in question to have signed the EPA is not, as one might think, better access to EU markets, but actually the defense of existing preferences, i.e. the “objective of binding the current level of EU preferences available through the Cotonou Agreement, and safeguarding these preferences from further WTO litigation” (Heron 2011: 344). Manger and Schadlen (2013) refer to this with the new concept of political trade dependence: as unilateral GSP preferences are frequently taken away, developing countries are pressured to sign North-South FTAs to ensure their future preferential access. Heron, however, casts doubts on the success of this endeavor as the preferences granted under the EPAs are likely to be eroded by the EU's future liberalization commitments with other countries, which especially affects the CARIFORUMs main export products. The main justification for signing more than a goods-only EPA is the intention of improving market access for non-traditional Caribbean exports as a motor for economic diversification, and reducing the dependence on agricultural commodities exports. Again, Heron doubts this aim was achieved, and instead finds that “the EPA is more likely to achieve the precise opposite [because the] agreement mainly consists of improving market access, even if only marginally, for traditional commodities like rum, beef, and dairy products, while exposing the region to a greater level of import competition for higher-value added industrial and other processed goods” (ibid: 345). Additionally, the EPA rids the region of the policy tools needed to implement a successful diversification strategy. The EPA is therefore actually more likely to reinforce the Caribbean's detrimental terms of trade, than to increase Caribbean non-traditional exports to the EU. Additionally, the CARIFORUM might have signed the EPA first in the belief that showing willingness to sign a comprehensive agreement and to be the first ACP group to do so would be key in ensuring important concessions from the EU regarding product exemptions, delayed implementation schedules and especially preferential access to development finance. (ibid: 345-349) In sum, the CARIFORUM EPA constitutes a trade off between immediate economic benefits that are small and short-term at best, and the long-term costs of losing the policy space necessary to employ the trade and industrial policies pursued by today's developed countries (ibid: 28). The EPA therefore “constituted a political bargain forged in a highly asymmetrical context, wherein the EU's market and financial power was amplified by the vulnerabilities, competitive dynamics and interregional rivalries inside the ACP” (Heron 2011: 350).

Mahadevan and Asafu-Ajaye (2010) found similar results for the case of Fiji, which had an incentive to sign the EPA in order not to lose EU sugar preferences. Like in the CARIFORUM case, the EPA was therefore signed first and foremost due to ‘political trade dependence’, and also similar to the CARIFORUM case, while the EPA leads to some growth in real output, it depresses rural employment and non-sugar agricultural exports, thereby further increasing commodity dependence on only one commodity with adverse terms of trade (Mahadevan, Asafu-Ajaye 2010).

This pattern appears to be the reason behind African states signing EPAs as well: Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana both signed bilateral interim EPAs in order to not lose their preferential access to the EU market. Nigeria on the other hand didn't sign an EPA and therefore had to fall back on less preferential GSP terms with much higher tariffs, which soon negatively impacted Nigeria's cocoa exports. (Küblböck, Forster 2008: 4). Mbatha and Charalambides's (2008) findings on the case of Botswana, which signed an interim EPA in 2009, support this analysis. While it is again argued that the EPA is

likely to have far-reaching, long-term negative impacts on regional economic development and institutional integration within SADC and SACU, the authors find that since Botswana would have fallen back on MFN tariffs, the country was sensible in signing the EPA. The case of Botswana is specifically interesting, since, had it not signed the EPA, it would not fall back on the Cotonou GSP scheme because – even though the country would be eligible as a middle income developing country – the GSP excludes beef and beef products, the second most important export commodity for Botswana (ibid: 421). The country would therefore have faced tariff increases from the preferential 5 percent under Cotonou to MFN tariffs ranging from 70 to 140 percent, under which conditions Botswana could not continue to export beef into the EU (ibid: 421f). In conclusion, therefore, based on “the predictable immediate gains from the new EPA to Botswana exporters, it makes sense that Botswana signed the SADC EPA with EU to avoid facing the MFN [...] tariffs” (Mbatha, Charalambides 2008: 424), however, “it is most likely that a high level of adjustment costs will be incurred in future. These are theoretically estimated as US\$ 359 million per year during the first years of liberalization” (ibid: 426).

Overall, there is sufficient evidence to say that the ACP sign EPAs in order not to lose the preferences they currently enjoy. While this results in some positive economic short-term effects, the EPAs are likely to incur high adjustment costs in the future and have negative impacts on the socio-economic and institutional development in the respective regions. In conclusion, therefore, ACP countries do not sign EPAs because of any beneficial development opportunities associated with them, but because they constitute the ‘lesser evil’ in the short-term.

3. CONSEQUENCES OF THE EPAS ON DEVELOPMENT IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The EPAs have a series of detrimental social, economic, political and ecological effects that cannot be described in detail here due to the limited space. The focus of this paper is the neoliberal context in which the EPAs are negotiated; nonetheless, the detrimental consequences need to be briefly introduced.

When the EPAs are seen in context of the complex linkages in the globalized regime, based on the consolidation of the neoliberal free trade paradigm, persisting large inequalities in government support for domestic agricultural producers between so-called developed and developing countries, and increasing industrialization pressures on agricultural systems in developing countries, their consequences from a food sovereignty perspective are clearly opposed to development.

Agricultural subsidization in the Global North, in the case of EPAs done via the EU CAP leads to dumping, and thereby the displacement of smallholders in the so-called developing countries. This displacement is facilitated by increased trade liberalization, e.g. in the form of EPAs, and intensified by the power and wealth concentration processes inherent in industrialized agriculture and the industrialization pressures on the Global South exerted for instance by AGRA, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa. These interconnections and mechanisms – elaborated in detail elsewhere (Weinzierl 2014) – contribute to a series of development-endangering effects: the displacement of smallholder farmers leads to increasing poverty, unemployment, urbanization and food import dependency; industrialized agriculture is associated with environmental degradation and climate change, as well as detrimental effects on human and animal health; and the integration of smallholders in global supply chains and various WTO rules and provisions of free trade agreements engender increased vulnerability to price volatility, a loss of self-determination and policy space, as

well as the loss of land and seed rights of farmers/biopiracy and landgrabbing (Weinzierl 2014). Overall, the orthodox paradigm, promoting agricultural industrialization and trade liberalization, leads to a loss of food sovereignty in the Global South. Some of these effects should be introduced in more detail, the rest of this section zooms in on the agricultural export and food import dependencies of the Global South that are created by these regimes, and their connection to food crises.

3.1. EXPORT AND IMPORT DEPENDENCE AND FOOD CRISES

Developing countries have been pressured to export primary commodities since colonial times (Pérez-Vitoria 2005: 129). Renewed pressure from the 'West' on developing countries to rely on the export of primary commodities was applied under the SAPs legitimated with the neoclassical doctrine of poverty eradication by growth induced via export promotion (Chopin, Strickner, Trouvé 2011: 88). Today, the advice international development institutions such as the World Bank give developing countries is still to rely on agricultural exports, although with a new face of diversification and inclusion of smallholders in global supply chains (Weingärtner, Trentmann 2011: 101; Hoering 2010: 74). This primary commodity dependence always went hand in hand with a loss of food sovereignty (Pérez-Vitoria 2005: 129) and the call for increased trade liberalization, even after the 2007/08 food crises showed the detriments of these policies. However, globalization critics have warned increasingly since the creation of the WTO that liberalization has negative consequences for small-scale farmers if prices drop, and for developing NFICs if prices rise (Watkins/Oxfam 1996: 53), a fear confirmed by the 2007/08 food crisis. They furthermore argue that African states are not under- but over-globalized in agricultural commodities compared do non-developing countries, and that the fact that the barriers for agricultural commodities are 4-7 times higher than for manufactured products constitutes a clear double standard in 'Western' liberalization discourse (Groth, Kneifel 2007: 30-37; Morrison, Sarris/FAO 2007: 21; IFAD 2004: 10). Studies furthermore show that liberalization has limited positive effects (Morrison, Sarris/FAO 2007: 16), while the negative ones outweigh them: countries dependent on the export of primary commodities face adverse terms of trade and increased price volatility; prices are furthermore determined in markets beyond the influence of individual developing countries, and there are supply side risks such as the sensitivity of output to climatic variability, especially droughts and excess rain (FAO 2003: 43).

The terms of trade of developing countries exporting agricultural commodities including foods and beverages as well as low-tech manufactures have deteriorated relatively steadily in the second half of the 20th century; only oil-exporting developing countries face less detrimental terms of trade. Between 1997 and 1998, the terms of trade faced by SSA countries deteriorated by 9 percent; this constituted a loss of real income of 2.6 percent of GDP. In 1998 food and tropical beverage prices fell by 13.6 percent, those of agricultural raw materials by 10.8. The 2002 coffee prices for example were less than a third of their 1997 level. (FAO 2003: 43) Figure 7 shows the terms of trade of LDCs between 1960 and 2006.

Figure 1: Terms of Trade of Least Developed Countries, 1960-2006



Source: Erten 2011: 178.

These policies promoting the export of agricultural commodities by developing countries clearly led to losses of food security and sovereignty as countries that were formerly self-sufficient became net food importers, while at the same time dependence on one or two commodities for a large share of their export earnings increased. However, due to slow market growth, adverse price trends, low value-added and high market competition, “dependence on primary commodities offers an almost automatic route to a diminishing share of world exports and world income” (Oxfam 2002: 73). This dependence is most acute in SSA, and especially in the LDCs and most African economies that still rely on traditional exports, notably coffee, cocoa, tea and palm oil (ibid: 74; 150ff). The most extreme example is Guinea Bissau: the countries GDP is to 97 percent dependent on the exports of cashew nuts (FAO 2006: 4f).

The other side of the coin is increased import dependency regarding staple foods: According to the World Bank almost three quarters of all low income countries are net food importers (42 out of 58 globally, 35 out of 47 in SSA). Out of these 47 SSA economies, 32 are net agricultural exporters and 15 are net importers regarding total agricultural trade. Concerning raw food trade however, only 12 SSA countries are net exporters, while a total of 35 SSA states rely on food imports. (Ng, Aksoy/ World Bank 2008: 6-13) Grain imports for instance have risen dramatically in African countries: wheat imports have increased six-fold between 1970 and 2005 (Bryceson 2010: 78). The cereal import bill for developing NFICs was 38 billion US-Dollars in 2010 and FAO predicted further increases to 50 billion by 2013 (Holt-Giménez 2010: 210). The role of liberalization must not be underestimated here. After the conclusion of the AoA, Senegal, for instance, faced increased import bills raised by 30 percent in the second half of the 1990s, compared to the years prior the AoA; in India this was even an increase by 168 percent (Hoering 2007: 132).

This shift from self-sufficiency to import dependency, accomplished by the colonization of developing countries' national food systems and the destruction of peasant agriculture (ibid) shows a major flaw in mainstream economic thinking: as the gap between Western and African industry and service sectors is even larger than the agricultural one, according to mainstream theory, African countries should have enjoyed increasing economic prosperity and wealth since the opening of their agricultural markets, given their comparative economic advantage in agriculture (Binswanger 2009: 41ff). But the opposite happened: “50 years ago developing countries had yearly agricultural trade surpluses of \$1 billion. After decades of capitalist development and the global expansion of the industrial agrifood complex, the southern food deficit has ballooned to \$11 billion a year.” (Holt-Giménez 2010: 210).

With continued liberalization, and especially the increasing involvement of financial players such as hedge funds, these bills can only rise, and also will become more volatile.

Regarding the EPAs, Sukati (2012) has estimated the effects on the import bill of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), one of the 7 negotiation regions: while the EU is expected to have a positive trade balance with the region of above 100 million US-Dollars, the SADC is clearly the losing party of such an agreement, with a negative trade balance of 1.6 billion US-Dollars with the EU, clearly showing the hypocrisy behind the development discourse underlying the EPAs, and casting doubt on the potential of economic growth benefits arising from the EPA.

This reliance on food imports in combination with an increased price volatility since the changes of the WTO Uruguay round (FAO 2003: 32f) leads to hunger crises and the socio-economic and political turmoil associated with it. This was the case in Mexico after NAFTA: "Over twenty-five years after the beginning of structural adjustment in the early eighties, Mexico is in a state of acute food insecurity, permanent economic crisis, political instability, and uncontrolled criminal activity" (Bello, Baviera 2010: 40; Watkins/Oxfam 1996: 38ff). Similarly, the Philippines, also a former net food exporter, saw a rice crisis in 2008 "and the essential reason was the same as in Mexico – that is, the subjugation of the country to a structural adjustment program" (ibid: 41). India's eruption of terrorism and extremism in Punjab in 1984, and the number of suicide waves among heavily indebted farmers in the 1990s and early 2000s also go back to the integration of small-farmers into global production chains, and the opening of markets in connection with agricultural industrialization processes (Shiva 2009: 38ff; Sharma 2009: 15; Anderegg 2004). Liberalization of financial markets can additionally have negative impacts on food security, not only due to increased speculation in food commodities, but also due to the excess exchange rate volatility it creates, which can lead to sudden export competition: When in 1997 during the East Asian financial crisis the Indonesian Rupiah collapsed, Indonesian tea became a lot cheaper than Indian tea. This forced Indian tea exports down and led to a drop in Indian production of 40 percent within only three years (Oxfam 2002: 155).

The neoliberal policies promoted by the World Bank and the IMF during structural adjustment also eroded the productive capacities of African agricultural systems (Bello, Baviera: 41f; Watkins/Oxfam 1996: 39f). Nigeria for instance was self-sufficient in wheat supply for a long time before the import surges caused by heavy subsidization in the US and EU of the 1970/80s. These wheat surges, however, were "evidence not of a growing gap between domestic productive capacity and need, but of local markets being restructured in a manner which favoured imports" (Watkins/Oxfam 1996: 40f). The country continued to suffer domestic food insecurities when it adopted the IMF induced structural adjustment in 1986, in spite of the promises proponents of liberalization made, and food insecurities continue to persist under the AoA and the [accessed: 10.1.2012]

Seeing as the EPAs promote the same development logic, they too will have negative effects on food self-sufficiency in Africa. The example of the EPA with CARIFORUM, the group of Caribbean states that negotiated the first comprehensive regional EPA, gives severe cause for concern in this respect. Gruni (2013), for instance, shows, that the provisions of this EPA regarding export restrictions are too narrow. In a neoliberal understanding of the instrument as a market distorter, the EPA prohibits the use of export restrictions as they can lead to price increases, which in turn have a negative impact on developing NFICs (Mitra, Josling 2009: 12). This understanding, however, omits the fact that during a food crisis export restrictions can, on the other hand, safeguard domestic food security (ibid: 3). This dilemma once again is a good argument for increased food sovereignty and self-sufficiency. In the case of the CARIFORUM EPA, it is, according to Gruni (2013), not justified to ban export restrictions entirely as the Caribbean has "negligible impact on the broader development of international trade law" (Gruni 2013: 876), so, in effect, the Caribbean countries lose their policy space, while other, more influential,

exporters preserve theirs. This constitutes a clear attack on development, as the Caribbean states are so small that their production levels are irrelevant for global food prices, and therefore do not cause the negative price volatility associated with the food crises the EU supposedly tries to prevent by a ban on export restrictions imposed on the CARIFORUM (ibid). Gruni, therefore, finds that the CARIFORUM EPA “does not contribute to the solution of the problems that export restrictions created during the 2007-2008 global food crisis”, but instead contributes to new challenges for food security, especially by diminishing the Caribbean states’ capacities to react to food shortages via export restrictions. In general he concludes that as WTO law does not ensure the special and differential treatment of developing countries in FTAs, exactly the opposite happens: “In fact, the Economic Partnership Agreements between the EU and ACP countries are more restrictive than the free trade agreements between the EU and Mexico, Chile and South Korea” (ibid: 882).

4. CONTOURS OF AN ALTERNATIVE FOOD AND TRADE REGIME

This paper exposed the hypocrisy of the development discourse surrounding the EPAs and the international trade regime they are embedded in. The fact that the free trade paradigm has spread to agricultural markets endangers development in the Global South and is an assault on the human right to food. In order to tackle the global issue of hunger – during the world food crisis 2007/08 when financial speculation on agricultural markets led the number of people suffering from hunger to spike at a staggering 1.2 billion – as well the myriad of negative consequences briefly mentioned in section 3, the food and international agricultural trade regime needs to be oriented around the concept of food sovereignty (in connection with the promotion of agro-ecological small-scale farming), which inevitably entails a relaxation of liberalization pressures on developing countries, and especially LDCs.

4.1. PRINCIPLES OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The current food regime is centered around the notion of ‘food security’, a concept that was formulated by western 'experts', which is based on the principle of food self-reliance; this means that it is conducive to the free trade paradigm, whereby a country’s specialization according to comparative advantage is supposed to be beneficial for everybody as long as it can trade freely – even if this entails the absurd and dangerous outcome of agricultural export dependencies and simultaneous food import dependencies as described above (Weinzierl 2014). The concept of food sovereignty on the other hand was La Via Campesina's answer to the creation of the WTO and the AoA in 1994. La Via Campesina is an international peasant movement, bringing together "millions of peasants, small and medium-size farmers, landless people, women farmers, indigenous people, migrants and agricultural workers from around the world" (Via Campesina 9.2.2011). The differences between food sovereignty and food security stem from the two underlying concepts of food self-sufficiency versus food self-reliance, the former meaning the meeting of domestic demand of food by domestic production (i.e. minimizing food imports), the latter implying a focus on generating enough income through the export of any possible commodity in order to be able to import enough food to satisfy domestic demand (FAO 2003: 35).

In 1996, the movement defined food sovereignty as the right of all peoples, communities and states to define their own agricultural policy as well as the obligation to not compromise other countries' agriculture (Choplin, Strickner, Trouvé 2011: 98). The concept was further developed at the first

Nyéléni summit in 2007 in Mali (and the subsequent fora in Europe), where peasants from around the world gathered to organize their struggle and to draft the Nyéléni Declaration, in which they call for the right to environmentally sound and culturally appropriate food, to participation in decision making processes, and to egalitarian relations of today's as well as future generations (Via Campesina 2007).

The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) defines food sovereignty as

“the right of individuals, communities, peoples and countries to define their own agricultural, labor, fishing, food and land policies, which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It includes the true right to food and to produce food, which means that all people have the right to safe, nutritious and cultural appropriate food and to food-producing resources and the ability to sustain themselves and their societies.” (Windfuhr, Jonsén/FIAN 2005: 12).

The Nyéléni Declaration, and the concept of food sovereignty in general, puts the human being instead of market forces and corporations in the centre of agricultural policy. It is based on the principles of food as a basic human right (sufficient, healthy and culturally adequate food for all individuals and communities); agrarian reform (ownership and control of the land has to be given to the landless and to those who work it); the protection of natural resources (agro-ecological practices and conservation of agro-biodiversity); the reorganization of food trade (based on self-sufficiency rather than self-reliance); the end of the globalization of hunger (banning financial speculation in agricultural markets and smashing agricultural monopolies and oligopolies); social peace; and democratic control at all levels (Windfuhr, Jonsén/FIAN 2005: 17; Choplin, Strickner, Trouvé 2011: 105-7, Via Campesina 7.6.2012: viacampesina.org).

4.2. THE REQUIRED POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

The transition towards food sovereignty and agroecological smallholder farming requires not only a strong countermovement based on an ethical paradigm shift and strategic alliances between food movements, farmer organizations and agroecology, but is crucially dependent upon supportive multi-level policies.

An overarching framework conducive to establishing food sovereignty and implementing the human right to food would be based on the findings of the IAASTD report (2009) (see table 2), international environmental treaties, the UN Declaration on Human Rights (UN General Assembly 1948) and the principles of democracy and solidarity. The IAASTD, the UN's International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science, and Technology for Development, was authored by over 400 scientists and development experts from more than 80 countries, and was co-sponsored by five UN agencies (FAO, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, WHO), the World Bank, and the Global Environmental Facility. The report insists that there is an “urgent need to increase and strengthen further research and adoption of locally appropriate and democratically controlled agroecological methods of production, relying on local expertise, local germ plasm, and farmer-managed local seed systems (Holt-Giménez 2010: 214).

In this context, Via Campesina is promoting the international recognition of the rights of peasants, based on a declaration the movement drafted in 2009. It includes the rights to life and to an adequate standard of living, to land, to seeds and traditional agricultural knowledge and practice, to means of agricultural production, to information and agricultural technology, the freedom to determine price and market for agricultural production, the right to the protection of agriculture values, the right to biological diversity and to preserve the environment, and the freedoms of association, opinion and expression, as well as the right to have access to justice (Via Campesina 2009). Based on this declaration Via Campesina called for an international convention on these rights (similarly to the UN

Conventions on the rights of indigenous peoples, women and migrant workers), which bore fruit in 2013, when an open-ended working group on a UN Declaration of the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas held a first session in July (OHCHR 2013).

Additionally to the implementation of these positive rights, however, Schanbacher (2013) argues for the recognition of negative rights connected to the human right to food: “Rather than contextualizing access to food as a failure on the part of affluent countries to provide a framework for securing the right to food, affluent countries (and their citizens) should recognize how we are *actively exacerbating* global hunger and malnutrition [by] creating and perpetuating any institutional order that denies global farmers the *freedom from* poverty, hunger and malnutrition.” (Schanbacher 2013: 1). This understanding of a rights-based approach is in line with the call for increased self-sufficiency (as opposed to self-reliance) regarding food production and the analysis of the negative effects of the neoliberal trade regime and the agricultural policies in the Global North mentioned in this paper. It is about “our negative duty to not impose upon global farmers institutions and social structures that deny them the *freedom to chose* how they wish to organize their own local communities’ efforts to achieve food self-sufficiency” (ibid).

4.3. ALTERNATIVES TO EPAS

Clearly then, alternatives to the EPAs as pursued by the EU must be found. The two WTO-compatible alternatives to the EPAs are extensions of the GSP or the EBA initiative. (Groth, Kneifel 2007: 68). According to Perez (2006), the solution most beneficial to the ACP states in terms of national welfare, as well as regional trade, would be the extension of a GSP-plus scheme to all ACPs instead of negotiating EPAs. Such a GSP-plus framework could extend the duty-free preferences available under GSP to the 250 tariff lines on the most sensitive ACP exports to the EU. Overall, extensive exclusion lists (i.e. lists of the so-called ‘special’ and ‘sensitive’ products) are necessary (Sharma 2009: 14; Echessah 2007: 534). Additionally, EU RoO and SPS need to be simplified (Hinkle, Schiff/World Bank 2004: 1323; Echessah 2007: 533). This paper highlights the hypocrisy of the development discourse surrounding the EPAs, a GSP-plus scheme on the other hand would not automatically imply negative developmental effects as the GSP is non-reciprocal. Overall, trade agreements between unequal partners conducive to development are non-reciprocal, protect and promote national and regional markets and producers, provide the required policy space to follow own development trajectories, do not push for liberalization in either goods nor services, resist privatization pressures in the context of intellectual property, and do not include the WTO-plus or Singapore issues (Groth, Kneifel 2007: 78, 83f). The EPAs, and FTAs in general, do not follow these principles; instead, they can be seen as EU instruments for the hegemonic implementation of neoliberal strategies, while the international trade regime and the WTO liberalization logic serve the EU to legitimize them. A revision of the WTO AoA is therefore also required in order to establish policy space conducive to food sovereignty; an option would be to implement a ‘development box’ as has been suggested by a group of developing countries. Additionally the TRIPS agreement needs to be revised and efforts to condemn biopiracy strengthened. Overall, multilateral trade rules need to ensure the survival of domestic food production. (Strickner 2009: 233f)

In conclusion, the protection of domestic agricultural markets is a global necessity, but the right to food sovereignty has to go hand in hand with the duty to show solidarity and a ban on dumping (as initially envisioned by the GATT agreement). Food Sovereignty is, however, not about autarky; on the contrary, the uneven population densities and distribution of arable land around the globe make international trade a necessity (Choplin, Strickner, Trouvé 2011: 98f):

“For most countries, trade in agriculture is necessary to balance supply with demand. Few countries are entirely self-sufficient in all the foods their people want and almost every country imports and exports at least some food. Trade is not, however, an end in itself. It is a tool that needs to be regulated to meet the goals of individual countries. It is important not to let trade rules dictate agricultural policy – trade is not a proxy for development. (Murphy 2010: 113f)

While free trade can ensue positive results to all partners (depending on other policies accompanying the free trade arrangement), FTAs between unequal partners in terms of economic and political strength, have increased the income and wealth gap between the Global North and South and countered development efforts (ibid). Regarding agriculture, at least basic foodstuffs have to be excluded from FTAs, as food is not a commodity like any other. Trade in foodstuffs should therefore only be complementary, but never a substitution for national food production. (Pérez-Vitoria 2005: 148; Bové, Dufour 2011: 222; Hansen-Kuhn 2011; Binswanger 2009: 52-59). After all, the “human right to food is not just about putting food in people’s mouths [...]. It is about ensuring that people have meaningful choices on how to live their lives, both as individuals and in community with one other.” (Murphy 2010: 115)

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