

X.A.4. Some Environmental Impacts of Liberalised World Trade in Agricultural Commodities

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India's share in the world trade in agricultural commodities is at present very low at about 0.4 per cent and has been stagnant around that level for the last years. Traditionally, agricultural exports of India comprised tea, coffee, spices, jute, but recently, rice and marine products have emerged as two major export commodities. The increasing export of both these commodities has aggravated the problem of degradation of environment. International trade in fish, for example, is a major factor underlying depletion of marine fisheries in India. Foreign exchange earnings from exports encourage many entrepreneurs and private companies to use large mechanised trawlers to harvest fish at a rate faster than that at which fish can be regenerated. This over-fishing not only accelerates the loss of species and genetic resources but also causes the loss of livelihoods of those poor people who exclusively depend on fishing and pollutes the sea. Similarly, due to increasing export of rice, especially basmati rice, and consequent higher price, rice cultivation has been extended to non-traditional areas such as Haryana, Punjab, and western Uttar Pradesh. As a consequence, large tracts of rice growing lands in these states are becoming degraded due to the problems of waterlogging and soil salinity. This paper attempts to first examine the recent trends in and composition of export of agricultural commodities from India and then study the environmental impacts of export of rice and fish with particular reference to India.