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The impact of trade policy and agreements on the development of international trade in Ukraine's agricultural sector

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► **Abstract.** International trade is now one of the main types of international relations, without which it is impossible to imagine the modern functioning of any economy. Thus, it is significant to investigate the impact of various types of government policies and individual agreements on this type of relationship and the very development of countries. The purpose of this study was to show how external activity and trade interact in the agricultural sector in Ukraine. The main methods employed in this study included analysis, forecasting, and abstraction. The study described the role of international trade, specifically in the agricultural sector, considering its significance for the country's economic development. The role of international trade was briefly described from a theoretical standpoint. The study, based on the analysis of statistical data, also showed the impact of trade agreements on the development of foreign trade. In the context of the study of the agricultural economy, it was shown that the gradual growth of Ukrainian agricultural exports, imports, and foreign trade is strongly related to the number of trade agreements concluded. The corresponding equation of dependence of values was constructed and its economic meaning was explained. The role of the sector in general, and specifically in the current martial law environment, was also described. Special attention was paid to Ukraine's agricultural sector, which plays a crucial role in economic development. The role of this sector and the unique characteristics of the industry were substantiated. A strong correlation between the number of trade agreements and the volume of international trade in the agricultural sector of Ukraine was noted through regression analysis, which led to conclusions about the role of trade agreements in the development of international trade in agricultural products. This study brings new knowledge in terms of assessing the role of international trade for the country's development, as well as analysing the current general state of Ukraine's economy

► **Keywords:** macroeconomics; public policy; management; international relations; development

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► Introduction

International trade itself plays a major role in the global economy and generally in society. It is the process of exchanging goods, services, capital, and other resources between countries through the purchase and sale of goods and services between entities located in different countries. The main benefit of this process is that different countries have different resources, competitive advantages, and production capabilities. This leads to the specialisation of countries in the production of certain goods and services. Thus, international trade allows countries to exchange goods and services for mutual benefit and raising overall living standards. As a result, it leads to faster economic growth over time, more efficient division of labour and specialisation (based on existing competitive advantages), access to different goods, etc. All these and other factors contribute to the fact that states are trying to develop free trade relations between them, but there are still reasons to limit them. They are diverse: it can be a desire to protect their own domestic market, the need to preserve their own strategic industries (e.g., agriculture), or to protect the external environment within the country. That is why it is significant to investigate how trade terms, tariffs, and other restrictions affect the development of international trade and the economy.

One of the key components of international trade is trade in agricultural products (Havrylyuk, 2022). This sector includes crop production, animal husbandry, forestry, and fishing. The trade in this type of product is still particularly relevant in Ukraine, which specialises in the production of this product, specifically grain. Thus, sales of agricultural goods account for the bulk of both budget revenues and foreign exchange earnings from abroad. Furthermore, the development of this sector brings significant benefits to the entire country's economy, namely by creating jobs and ensuring food security. Thus, it is important to consider the factors that influence international trade in agricultural products. This study focused on the impact of international trade through tariffs and other restrictions.

Many scholars have analysed international trade generally, and Ukrainian trade specifically. Thus, O. Ilyash *et al.* (2019) assessed changes in Ukraine's export-import commodity flows in international trade as a result of the Russian occupation (before the full-scale invasion). Scientists noted and described the main trends in the country's international trade, primarily related to the geographical reorientation of the country in terms of imports to the countries of the East and exports to the West. U.V. Rosola *et al.* (2023) investigate the impact of the war on Ukraine's economy from the economic standpoint, including in terms of trade. The scientists described the significant adverse consequences that are relevant to the country now, and also made their predictions about how the situation might develop in the future. N. Parkhomenko *et al.* (2022) described Ukraine's considerable export potential in the agricultural sector and emphasised the importance of food safety and state support. For these purposes, scientists have proposed certain components to increase this potential and support it, specifically, by modernising the supporting infrastructure, such as seaports. O. Totska (2022) emphasises the importance of continuous monitoring and forecasting of

Ukraine's agricultural exports in the context of its European integration and international trade. The researcher showed the difference in the export potential of different types of Ukrainian agricultural products but did not provide sufficient recommendations to avoid these difficulties. F. Zhang (2020) investigated the analysis of the current situation of agricultural trade between China and Ukraine within the framework of their study. The researcher demonstrated the fact of growing interaction between countries in the context of international economic relations and provided advice on how to further improve them using various methods.

The purpose of the present study was to show how various restrictions in the context of international trade (specifically in agriculture) affect economic development, using evidence from Ukraine. This will not only help to build a more effective international trade policy, but also bring new knowledge in the field of international trade studies.

► Materials and Methods

The study assessed the statistical data characterising Ukraine's foreign trade. For this, separate databases were used, namely, the World Bank (Exports of goods..., n.d.; Imports of goods..., n.d.) (to analyse data characterising the country's foreign trade) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (RTAs currently in force..., 2023) (to analyse the number of trade agreements concluded by the country). Data on the level of depreciation of the dollar was also used (as the data used was denominated in this currency). For this, the website Calculator.net was used (Inflation calculator..., n.d.). Subsequently, based on these data, a regression model was built to characterise the impact of the number of agreements on international trade and foreign trade in agriculture. First, the volume of Ukraine's foreign trade was determined in dollar terms for 1992-2022 (and 2003-2022, respectively). Subsequently, their value was adjusted for the US dollar inflation rate (to estimate the real data without the impact of currency depreciation). This variable was defined as a dependent variable, while the number of trade agreements established between Ukraine and other countries – as an independent variable. Based on these data, a regression equation was constructed, which in the general case (with one independent variable) has the following form:

$$y = a + bx, \quad (1)$$

where y is the dependent variable (in this case, the volume of foreign trade adjusted for inflation); x is the independent variable (the number of trade agreements concluded).

Thus, the main approach used in this study was a systematic one. This helped to analyse individual factors influencing international trade, assessing it within a single model within which they interact with each other. This increased the efficiency of the analysis of these factors and made the conclusions clearer and more balanced. The method used in the study was analysis. It helped to conclude on the current state of Ukraine's international trade based on known qualitative and quantitative indicators about this phenomenon. The historical method was used

to assess the characteristics of the impact on Ukraine's foreign trade, forming the basis for analysing this information on past data, analysing it in retrospect. Abstraction was also used, which made it possible to ignore the impact of certain factors on a country's foreign trade if their real impact on it is too small. This helped to improve the accuracy of the models built during the study. The forecasting method was also used to assess the future development of Ukraine's international trade based on the information collected so far. Statistical analysis methods were used to analyse quantitative data, in particular, the volume of the country's foreign trade. All the calculations were made in Microsoft Excel.

► Results

To begin with, it is worth noting that international trade in general is always beneficial for the economic development of the countries between which such relations take place. The reason for this is that, in the case of trade between countries, each country focuses on producing goods whose relative production costs are minimal and buys those whose production costs are more expensive. However, despite this, various barriers that restrict or make trade between individual countries impossible are still widespread around the world. Moreover, this is still the case despite all the WTO's efforts to create freer trade relations between countries (Larch *et al.*, 2019). The organisation's overall function is to promote free trade (entering into trade agreements and treaties aimed at reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers (Baier *et al.*, 2019). However, opinions on the real effectiveness of this organisation vary (Mahmudlu, 2021). While it cannot be denied that trade conditions between the countries have admittedly become freer in recent years, some differences still exist. WTO has also been criticised for being slow to resolve conflicts, as the mechanisms for doing so are too lengthy and complex.

The types of restrictions themselves can be varied. The most common tariffs are those levied on imported goods upon entry into the country. Tariffs can be specific (a fixed amount per unit of goods) or ad valorem (a percentage of the value of the goods), but in any case, they have the same goals: to provide the state budget with funds, to make it more difficult for other companies to enter the market, and to improve conditions on the domestic market for local producers (Ibragimova, 2020). International companies entering such a country will be forced to raise their prices compared to the world market. Another analogous instrument is a quota, which is a restriction on the amount of goods that can be imported into a country during a certain period. This can be a restriction on the quantity of goods, the amount of value, or any other indicators. In this case, the advantage is that the state itself understands exactly how much of a product will be sold on the market, which simplifies the activities of enterprises in the market. States also impose other types of restrictions, which may be related to, e.g., quality control of products imported into the domestic market or their compliance with environmental standards. Although formally related to health and environmental protection, such measures may also be imposed to reduce the impact of a particular company or companies on the domestic market.

Thus, the reasons for imposing restrictions on free trade by a country may vary. They may vary from case to case and may be either realistic or not optimal in a given situation (Furceri *et al.*, 2020). For instance, every country has strategically important industries that need to be developed within the country. These include agriculture, medicine, energy, etc. There is a reasonable need to introduce various restrictions for such areas of activity, as this will increase the country's resilience to various international crises (reducing dependence on prices for key products vital to the country). Such industries also include those that generate a relatively significant amount of added value in the manufacture of their products, such as machine building, aircraft construction, etc. Often, the reason for introducing such restrictions is considered as having social consequences, e.g., restrictions on foreign companies are imposed in industries that can create many jobs domestically. However, this reason is insufficient to support such an industry, as its development may prove to be completely inefficient for the country in the long run. This situation is similar to the failure of machines in agriculture to provide traditional tools to maintain the number of jobs in the country. Thus, the introduction of such restrictions can often be unjustified and caused either by a lack of awareness of the people who introduce them, or by populism, or any other analogous reasons.

In contrast to restrictions, there are trade agreements that, on the contrary, pursue to improve the level of trade between countries. They often reduce tariffs and duties, as well as any other restrictions related to the difficulty of entering the market. Most often, the formation of such agreements is related to economic expediency (under such agreements, countries reduce restrictions on certain groups of goods, joint trade in which is particularly important and profitable for them) or political expediency (the emergence of such agreements may be one of the steps to strengthen strategic alliances between countries). Although from an economic standpoint, such interaction should necessarily lead to improved economic development, this is not always the case. This is especially evident in the case of trade agreements between a large and a small country: in this case, the main beneficiary is often the large country, while for the small country, the fact of the alliance is more important than economic prosperity. The latter is the reason such agreements exist. The conclusion of such agreements should generally lead to an increase in trade between the countries, which may include a reduction in customs tariffs, legalisation of certain types of trade, and simplification of customs, and other administrative procedures. This expansion provides local producers with access to new markets, which expands their sales opportunities and increases their competitiveness in the international market. Furthermore, this may cause a decrease in the cost of such goods for consumers in both countries. All these components form the main reason why international trade liberalisation, and thus the conclusion of trade agreements that facilitate it, most often lead to net gains for society. It is also worth considering how trade agreements affect trade by analysing statistical data. Figure 1 shows Ukraine's foreign trade performance in 1989-2022:

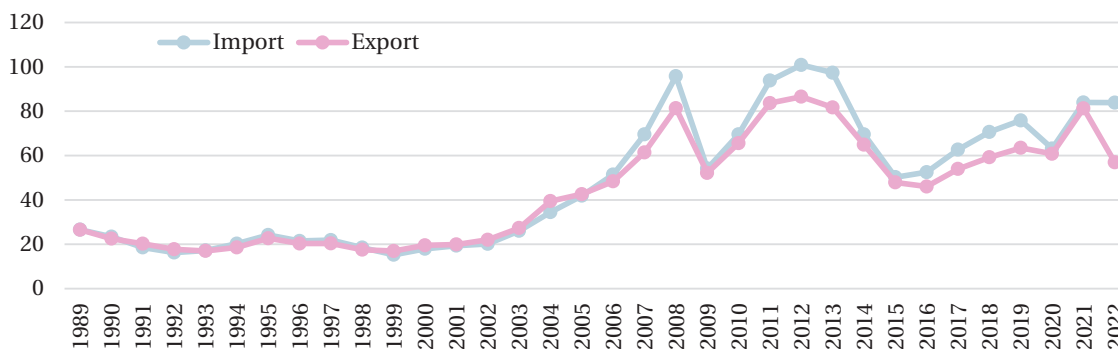


Figure 1. Data broken down by Ukraine's trade volumes in 1989-2022, USD billion

Source: compiled by the authors of this study based on Exports of goods and services (current US\$) – Ukraine (n.d.); Imports of goods and services (current US\$) – Ukraine (n.d.)

As Figure 1 suggests, Ukraine's foreign trade is quite volatile and heterogeneous; the graph shows various trends in its development (both upward and downward), which were determined by both the current global situation and the situation related to Ukraine (specifically, the trends in trade to gross domestic product (GDP) after the outbreak of the war with Russia in 2014 changed significantly), and is therefore also part of certain international

trade agreements. To analyse the impact of trade agreements on Ukraine's international trade, it was decided to evaluate the data on the number of regional trade agreements (RTAs) and inflation-adjusted international trade volumes. Generally, the country is a relatively active participant in international trade (as evidenced by the ratio values). The number of transactions is presented in Figure 2 below:

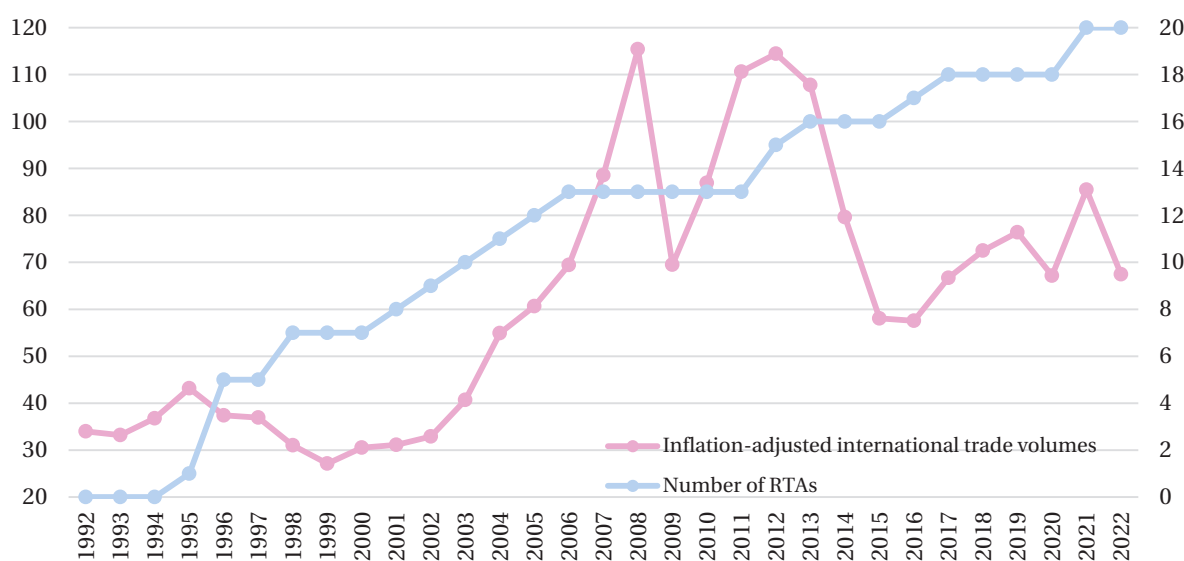


Figure 2. International trade volumes adjusted for inflation (USD billion) and the number of RTAs in Ukraine from 1992 to 2022

Source: compiled by the authors of this study based on Exports of goods and services (current US\$) – Ukraine (n.d.); Imports of goods and services (current US\$) – Ukraine. (n.d.); RTAs currently in force (by year of entry into force), 1948-2023 (2023); Inflation calculator with U.S. CPI data (n.d.)

As Figure 2 suggests, inflation-adjusted international trade and the number of regional trade agreements are both on an upward trend. Often, the growth of international trade in Ukraine was caused by the conclusion of new agreements, while the unchanged number of agreements led to stagnation or no growth in the number of RTAs. This is also confirmed by statistical indicators: specifically, the correlation level between the indicators is 0.66, which is quite high. Therewith, if one builds a linear regression equation

in terms of the interaction between the indicators, it will be statistically significant (the p-value for both values is below the threshold of 0.05). The equation constructed in this way, with trade volumes as the dependent variable and the number of RTAs as the independent variable, is as follows:

$$y = 28.414 + 2.964x, \quad (1)$$

where y is the volume of international trade of Ukraine; x is the number of RTAs.

Thus, trade agreements have a significant impact on Ukraine's foreign trade, and thus on the entire country's economy. The agricultural sector plays a special role in Ukraine's foreign trade, particularly in ensuring its stability. Ukraine has significant potential for growing a variety of crops and producing food, including grains, oilseeds, sugar beet, meat, and milk. Exports of agricultural products help attract foreign currency and increase the country's solvency. It is also an essential component of food security, as it reduces dependence on food imports, allowing the country to ensure food security and control food prices. It also allows for the development of rural areas, creates jobs, and influences other industries, e.g., allowing for the development of biofuel production. Thus, Ukrainian agriculture is a key component of economic development and foreign trade in general. The trade in

these products has its own specific features. Thus, crop and livestock production is highly dependent on natural conditions such as climate, soil, topography, and water availability, making some countries highly dependent on agricultural products (if they are located in areas that are difficult to grow) (Jakob, 2021). Furthermore, many agricultural products are grown and harvested during specific periods of the year, leading to seasonal changes in agricultural trade, which requires efficient storage and transportation to extend the shelf life. In addition, some years may be poorly harvested due to changes in weather conditions, which affects the price and volume of products on the international market. Thus, all these factors should be considered when building more complex models related to the analysis of agricultural trade. Figure 3 presents the volume of foreign trade in this component of Ukraine:



Figure 3. Volumes of exports, imports, and foreign trade in Ukraine in 2003-2022, billion USD

Source: compiled by the authors of this study based on data from Trade Map (n.d.)

Figure 3 shows the gradual growth of Ukraine's imports, exports, and foreign trade in agricultural products over time in US dollar terms. It somewhat resembles the

configuration presented above in Figure 2. Figure 4 presents inflation-adjusted foreign trade volumes and the number of RTAs:

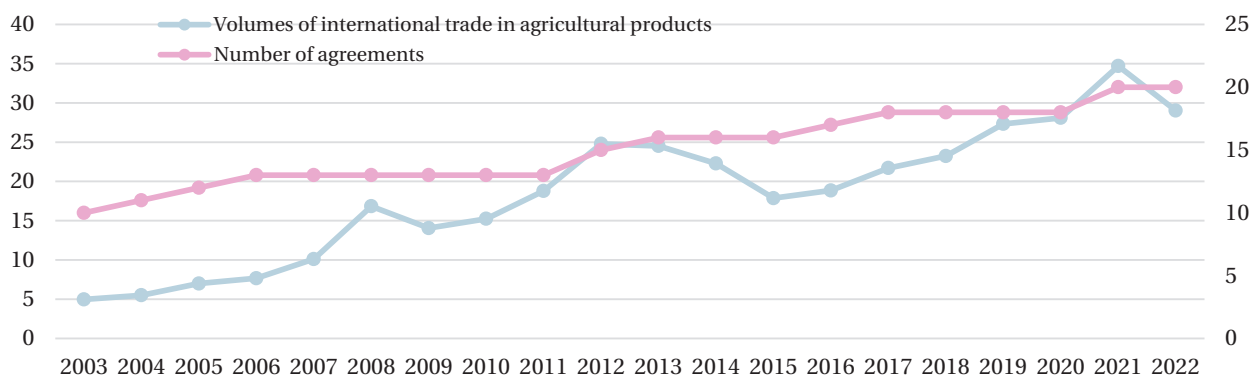


Figure 4. Volumes of foreign trade in agricultural products adjusted for inflation (USD billion) and number of RTAs

Source: compiled by the authors of this study based on Trade Map (n.d.); Inflation calculator with U.S. CPI data (n.d.)

As Figure 4 suggests, the volume of foreign trade in agricultural products in Ukraine is also strongly correlated with the number of international agreements concluded. However, more detailed information on their interaction can be obtained by estimating the regression equation presented in Formula 2:

$$y = 9.2688 + 0.3157x, \quad (2)$$

where y is the volume of Ukraine's international trade in agriculture; x is the number of RTAs.

Other characteristics of the model are as follows: R^2 (Adjusted) – 0.81; Significance F and p-value – close to 0. In other words, according to this model, the number of RTAs explains 81% of the changes over time in the indicator of international trade in agricultural products. At the same time, all variables are significant, and the model is

adequate. All this suggests a very significant interaction between the number of agreements concluded between countries and the volume of international trade in agricultural products. However, these conclusions are based on information from only 20 observations, as more information on foreign trade in agricultural products is not currently available. Therefore, it is worth conducting additional research in the future on this issue to draw final conclusions.

► Discussion

T.P. Cuong & N.H. Tien (2022) investigated the role of international trade in international business in their research. The scholars emphasised the importance of implementing the right and relevant trade policy to exploit comparative advantages in international trade and expand regional and global markets, as well as the need to focus on selecting the most profitable products and markets for international trade development. Furthermore, they noted the importance of developing a comprehensive legal framework for commercial activities both domestically and internationally, as well as simplifying the conditions for international trade (reducing or eliminating various conditions, restrictions, etc.). Notably, such recommendations would be useful for Ukraine, but not in a time of war. In this case, trade policy should be special: the reason for this is that the state as such is in dire need of increased budget revenues to finance all the costs associated with the war. Furthermore, the security of citizens is reaching a new level, and various dangerous items can be brought into the country along with goods obtained through international trade. Thus, trade policy in this case should be stricter, and special (even greater) attention should be paid to customs issues and how they make decisions on whether to allow goods into the country. S.L. Baier & J.H. Bergstrand (2007) investigated the impact of free trade agreements on international trade flows. The researchers showed that such agreements generally had a significant and positive impact on international trade flows. Specifically, on average, they have doubled bilateral trade between two member states every 10 years, which is an impressive rate. Thus, their use can be considered effective and qualitative for the countries.

P. Barlow *et al.* (2021) studied the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on global trade. They noted that the global pandemic has caused considerable damage to world trade but has allowed governments to reassess globalisation and develop trade policies. Scientists believe that trade policy in the future should also contribute to a more sustainable development of people, enabling them to be healthier than before. They write that the link between trade and health exists because of the spread of disease during the pandemic through trade routes; therefore, policy makers should consider the broader links between trade, trade policy, and the determinants of health. In general, this approach makes it even more difficult to form interactions between countries in terms of trade agreements. A. Berger *et al.* (2020) conducted studies on how environmental regulations affect international trade. The researchers concluded that environmental provisions in preferential trade agreements do not constitute significant restrictions on the exports of developing countries. Thus, environmental provisions in these agreements can help reduce dirty exports and promote

green exports from developing countries, creating win-win scenarios for economic and environmental benefits. They can be effective policy tools to counteract the potential effects of pollution. In other words, the researchers believe that the introduction of such restrictions may ultimately prove beneficial for both countries, as it will reduce trade, but not significantly, and therefore will have an overall positive impact on the countries.

W. Saraithong (2018) substantiated the existing trade restrictions for food safety implementation. Generally, as described above, such restrictions related to ensuring the development of certain strategically important industries can be considered almost the only ones that are rational on the part of the country. However, the scientist noted that the state's actions related to the establishment of such restrictions may in fact be caused by different reasons. This can be done both to protect and increase budget revenues and to improve the social health of citizens. The study highlights the importance of understanding both domestic factors and changing global contexts in the application of food safety standards. This emphasises the need for stakeholders to closely monitor multilateral and bilateral trade negotiations, as they may have a substantial impact on the implementation of such restrictions.

C. Tortajada & F. González-Gómez (2022) investigated the impact of international trade in food and agricultural products in the context of groundwater depletion. Scientists have described that since 1995, trade in food and agricultural products has doubled in real terms, specifically due to the development of developing countries. In this regard, food production was also increased successfully. However, all this has had a negative impact on environmental development opportunities, namely through the exploitation of groundwater. Considering this, scientists are calling for more attention to be paid to this component, especially to the development of relevant environmental policies. Scientists also suggested that regions and countries consider growing less water-intensive crops and convert irrigated agriculture to rainfed agriculture to adapt to climate change. However, all such changes must be driven by the influence and support of government agencies. Generally, in the current context, ensuring agricultural sustainability is admittedly an essential component of development for Ukraine, but due to Russia's full-scale invasion, these issues have been put on the back burner. Nevertheless, after the end of the war, government officials should pay much more attention to environmental issues in the agricultural sector.

R. Barichello (2020) described the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and predicted its impact on Canadian agricultural trade. The scientist noted the general adverse impact of this crisis on the economy of developing countries, and on international trade specifically. However, it had a lesser impact on agriculture due to the lower elasticity of income to demand. In terms of the prospects for the growth of agricultural trade in Canada, the scientist notes that it exists, but on a different scale in different categories. Thus, cereals are expected to perform relatively better, while legumes are expected to drop. A slightly different situation in terms of trade in agricultural products was observed in the study above. In Ukraine, the volume of trade in these products has only increased,

driven by the country's focus on grain exports and rising prices. Thus, the pandemic, as well as crises, can have a different impact on sales of agricultural products, which should be considered when formulating policy in this area.

Thus, restrictions and trade agreements do have a significant impact on international trade, and on trade in agricultural products specifically. However, other factors should also be considered when shaping international policy. Therefore, in Ukraine's current circumstances, to increase international trade, it is vital not only to pay attention to trade agreements and interaction between countries, but also to the situation within the country, to support internal producers affected by the war, etc. Only then will it be possible to achieve success in ensuring the development of foreign trade.

► Conclusions

Thus, international trade plays a key role in the economic development of countries around the world, including Ukraine. It also contributes to global economic growth by attracting foreign investment, which has a lasting positive impact on economic development. Despite the many benefits of international trade, barriers and restrictions continue to be imposed by countries. Unlike trade restrictions, trade agreements are aimed at expanding trade between countries. In most cases, they lead to improved economic development of countries through various effects: increased market access for local producers, foreign investment, and lower costs for consumers. The same re-

sult was achieved when assessing the statistical data characterising Ukraine's foreign trade. It was proved that the number of valid trade agreements affects the volume of trade and leads to an increase in its volume.

The same assessment was made in terms of agricultural exports. It was shown that this sector plays a significant role in foreign trade and in overall food security. Analysing the relationship between the number of RTAs and the volume of international agricultural trade in Ukraine, a significant correlation was found: it was shown that they account for 81% of all changes in the volume of agricultural trade. This highlights the significant impact of trade agreements on agricultural trade and, as a result, on the country's economic development. All this suggests the importance of strengthening future cooperation between Ukraine and other countries in the context of international trade in the future.

It is relevant for future research to create a strategy for the development of Ukraine's international trade, with a focus on the existing problems associated with Russia's full-scale invasion. Furthermore, it is vital to analyse international practices in this area to find methods that can be used in local realities.

► Acknowledgements

None.

► Conflict of Interest

The authors of this study declare no conflict of interest.

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Вплив торговельної політики та угод на розвиток міжнародної торгівлі в аграрному секторі України

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► **Анотація.** Міжнародна торгівля нині є одним із основних видів міжнародних відносин, без існування яких неможливо уявити сучасне функціонування будь-якої економіки. Таким чином, актуальним залишається проведення досліджень впливу різних видів державної політики та окремих угод на даний вид відносин та власне розвиток країн. Ціллю даного дослідження було показати, яка існує взаємодія між зовнішньою діяльністю та обсягами її торгівлі в сфері сільського господарства на прикладі України. Основними методами дослідження, що були використані під час написання, стали аналіз, прогнозування та абстрагування. В рамках роботи було описано роль міжнародної торгівлі, зокрема в аграрному секторі зважаючи на його роль для економічного розвитку країни. Було коротко описано роль міжнародної торгівлі з теоретичної точки зору. В рамках дослідження, на основі аналізу статистичних даних, було також показано який вплив чинить вкладення торговельних договорів на розвиток зовнішньої торгівлі. У розрізі дослідження аграрної економіки було показано, що поступове зростання обсягів українського аграрного експорту, імпорту та зовнішньої торгівлі сильно пов'язані із кількістю укладених торговельних угод. Було побудоване відповідне рівняння залежності величин, а також пояснено його економічний сенс. Також описувалася роль сектору в цілому, а зокрема в сучасній умовах військового стану. Особливу увагу було приділено аграрному сектору України, який відіграє вирішальну роль в економічному розвитку. Було обґрунтовано роль даного сектору та унікальні характеристики галузі. Відмічався сильний взаємозв'язок між кількістю торговельних угод та обсягом міжнародної торгівлі в аграрному секторі України за допомогою проведеного регресивного аналізу, на основі чого формувалися висновки з приводу ролі торговельних угод для розвитку міжнародної торгівлі продукцією аграрного сектору. Дане дослідження приносить нові знання у розрізі оцінки ролі міжнародної торгівлі для розвитку країни, а також аналізу сучасного стану економіки України в цілому

► **Ключові слова:** макроекономіка; державна політика; управління; міжнародні відносини; розвиток