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Repurposing agricultural policies in ECOWAS: the stumbling blocks in improving intra-ECOWAS agri-food trade

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Introduction

- Intra-ECOWAS agri-food trade offers resilience to food insecurity and opportunity for economic growth and poverty reduction.
- Unlocking these opportunities requires purposive and responsive agricultural policy.
- Intra-ECOWAS trade is low, calculated at about 10% while the agri-trade stood at 9% in 2021.
- However, ECOWAS's population is increasing geometrically.
 - currently, 418 million (2022) and is projected to double by 2050 to over 787 million.
- A departure from the extant policies that produce less desired outcomes becomes inevitable.
- The low agri-food trade within ECOWAS is largely due to market access hindrances, despite the extant ETLs.

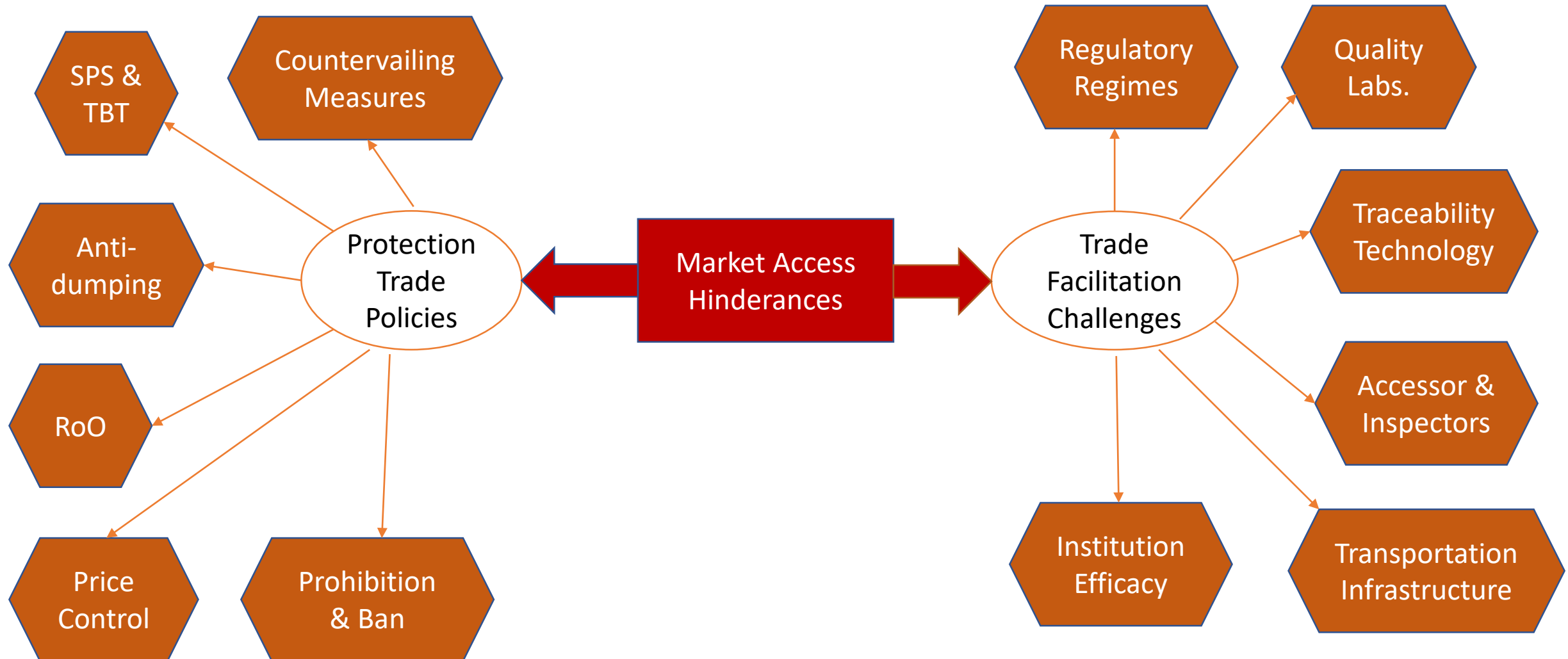
2. The Context

Table 1: Intra-ECOWAS agri-food trade market access hindrances

Market access hindrances in the agri-food sector	
Protective Tariffs	Heterogeneous Standards Requirements
Burdensome Customs Procedures	Inadequate Application of Equivalent Principle
Weak Institutional Enforcement	Rules of Origin
Agencies Duplication of Functions	Trade Licenses
Homogeneity of agricultural export commodities	Non-existence of Dispute Settlement
Poor Infrastructure	The preponderance of Safeguard Measures
Compliance Certification Difficulties	Incidences of Anti-dumping and Countervailing Measures

Source: Kareem (2019)

2. The Context cont.



2. The Context cont.

Table 2: Different policy measures imposed on the intra-ECOWS agri-food trade actors.

Purpose	Required Documentation
Trader	Trading certificate
	ETLS certificate
	Fisherman card/forestry certificate
	Vaccination certificate
	Health Yellow Card
Transportation/Logistics	ECOWAS load agreement certificate
	Bond guarantee
	Vaccination certificate
	Vehicle registration
	Transporter insurance
Agri-food	Sanitary and Phytosanitary certificate
	Produce clearance certificate – quarantine
	Produce inspection certificate
	Health/Fumigation certificate
	Packaging and labelling

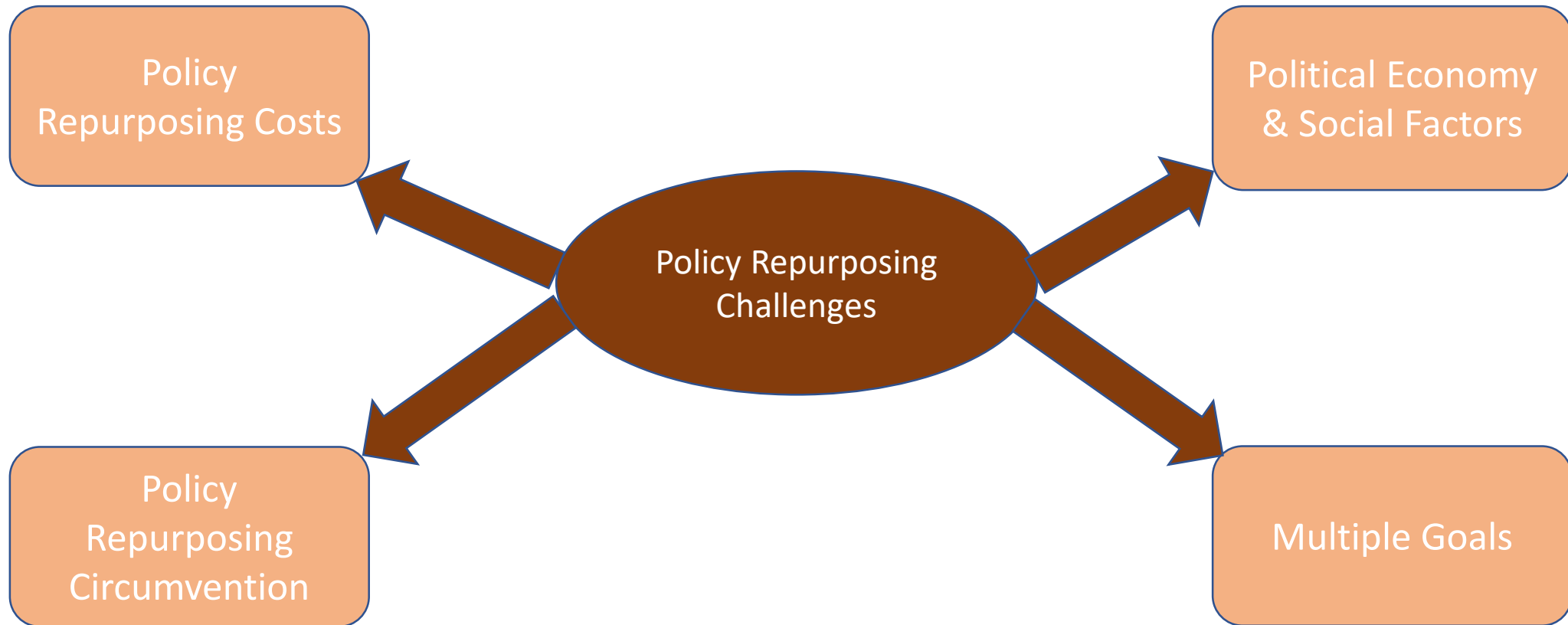
Source: Kareem and Wieck (2022)

2. The Context cont.

- Thus, repurposing current agri-trade policies has been inevitable, if ECOWAS wants to reap the benefits of intraregional trade.
- Besides, repurposing agricultural policies has never become more necessary than now owing to the dynamics in global challenges.
- These stumbling blocks in intra-ECOWAS agri-food policies brought to the fore the deficiencies in extant agri-food policies.

3. Policy Repurposing Challenges

- The stumbling blocks to repurposing or reforming agri-food trade policies in ECOWAS are:



3. Policy Repurposing Challenges

- The cost of policy repurposing;
 - policy restructuring entails costs, which are unavoidable for some countries.
 - it entails higher costs than the extant agri-food trade policy.
- Multiple goals challenge;
 - lead to policy conflict.
- Political economy and social factors
 - inadequate political will for policy redirection (especially, when it depletes political capital).
 - more of political consideration than agri-food trade actors.
 - when it affects the social capital of the political class.
 - lobbyist effect.
- Circumvention
 - activities of political and economic saboteurs.
 - policy gerrymandering.

4. Conclusion

- Repurposing intra-ECOWAS agri-food trade policies requires strategic political and economic commitments from the Member States to bare the costs of the policy reform and eliminate:
 - policy conflicts in attaining multiple goals;
 - circumvention of the policy restructuring,
 - reduce regional trade politics.
- Besides, the Member state should unequivocally and unambiguously be committed to:
 - completely harmonised all the differences in the border measures, particularly;
 - custom procedures, axle limit, truck roadworthiness, transportation size requirements, etc.
 - synchronising the activities of similar trade regulatory and implementation agencies.

References

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