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**ẢNH HƯỞNG CỦA CÁC RÀO CẢN THƯƠNG MẠI XANH CỦA EU ĐỐI VỚI
THƯƠNG MẠI NÔNG NGHIỆP: NGHIÊN CỨU TRƯỜNG HỢP XUẤT KHẨU
NÔNG, THỦY SẢN CỦA VIỆT NAM**

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Tóm tắt

Xuất khẩu nông sản và thủy sản của Việt Nam đang đối mặt với nhiều thách thức lớn do các rào cản thương mại xanh của Liên minh châu Âu (EU), vốn áp đặt các quy định nghiêm ngặt về môi trường và tính bền vững. Bài viết này nghiên cứu tác động của các rào cản này đến ngành xuất khẩu của Việt Nam, tập trung vào các mặt hàng chủ lực và hiệu quả thương mại. Thông qua phương pháp nghiên cứu tình huống, bài viết phân tích cả những tác động tích cực và tiêu cực của rào cản thương mại xanh EU, bao gồm việc nâng cao chất lượng sản phẩm và khả năng cạnh tranh trên thị trường, cũng như chi phí tuân thủ tăng cao và sự hạn chế trong tiếp cận thị

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trường. Nghiên cứu sử dụng dữ liệu thứ cấp từ tài liệu học thuật, báo cáo ngành và số liệu thống kê thương mại để đánh giá phản ứng của Chính phủ và ngành hàng Việt Nam, như các chính sách và sáng kiến phát triển bền vững. Bằng cách đánh giá các động lực này, bài viết đề xuất một số khuyến nghị cho Chính phủ, doanh nghiệp, nông dân và các đối tác quốc tế nhằm đối phó với thách thức và tận dụng cơ hội.

Từ khoá: rào cản thương mại xanh EU, xuất khẩu nông sản, Việt Nam, thủy sản, thương mại bền vững

THE IMPACT OF EU GREEN TRADE BARRIERS ON AGRICULTURAL TRADE: A CASE STUDY FROM VIETNAM'S AGRICULTURAL AND FISHERY EXPORT

Abstract

Vietnam's agricultural and fishery exports face significant challenges due to the European Union's green trade barriers, which impose stringent environmental and sustainability regulations. This paper investigates the impact of these barriers on Vietnam's export sector, focusing on key products and trade performance. Through a case study approach, it analyzes both the positive and negative effects of EU green trade barriers, including enhanced product quality and market competitiveness, as well as increased compliance costs and restricted market access. The study draws on secondary data from academic literature, industry reports, and trade statistics to assess Vietnam's government and industry responses, such as policy measures and sustainability initiatives. By evaluating these dynamics, the paper proposes recommendations for the Vietnamese government, enterprises, farmers, and international partners to address challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

Keywords: EU green trade barriers, Vietnam, agricultural exports, fishery exports, trade sustainability

1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) globally supports sustainability through its implementation of environmental and social criteria in trade agreements under green trade barriers. The European Union has developed the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), Farm to Fork Strategy, and strict carbon emissions and pesticide residue policies to support sustainable international trade. However, these green trade barriers pose substantial challenges for exporters from developing countries. Vietnam plays a vital role as a strategic partner of the EU in the Asia-Pacific, with

the European Union serving as a major destination for Vietnamese exports, particularly seafood and agricultural goods like rice, coffee, prawns, and pangasius. The implementation of EU green trade barriers will lead to considerable changes in production methods, certification processes, and supply chain operations that will impact the trade performance and competitiveness of Vietnamese exporters.

This study, “The impact of EU green trade barriers on agricultural trade: A case study from Vietnam’s agricultural and fishery export”, will use qualitative methods to analyze how the European Union’s green trade barriers affect Vietnam’s ability to export agricultural and fishery products along with the scope and implications of these trade barriers, while also assessing their direct and indirect impacts on Vietnam’s export performance and evaluate the response strategies of both the Vietnamese government and industry stakeholders. The ultimate goal is to provide actionable recommendations to help Vietnam’s agricultural and fishery sectors better adapt to and overcome EU green trade barriers.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Green trade barriers

Green trade barriers are trade regulations imposed on imported products in international trade, aiming to mitigate environmental issues, protect natural resources, and human health. When it comes to agricultural product exports, these barriers are primarily set by developed countries, requiring compliance with environmental requirements at every stage from production to consumption (Peihua Zhao & Shuxian Gao, 2024). From a market demand standpoint, these barriers reflect stricter environmental and quality requirements in importing countries (Shehzad et al., 2020). This poses challenges for developing countries, as their agricultural products frequently fail to meet these standards, leading to export limitations, reduced global competitiveness, higher export costs, and diminished market share. For economies dependent on agricultural exports, such restrictions have considerable impact on their trade sectors (Broadstock et al., 2021).

The Article XX of the GATT is the primary legal foundation for green trade barriers, particularly subsections (b) and (g), which allow measures to protect human, animal, or plant health and conserve exhaustible natural resources. However, due to their broad language, these provisions face the risk of being misused as a form of trade protectionism. To prevent abuse, Article XX imposes strict conditions, and dispute settlement bodies apply a "strict interpretation" principle when evaluating its clauses.

Further refining these rules, the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) and the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) were established. The TBT Agreement permits technical barriers for environmental protection, national security, public health, and product quality—making it a legal basis for green trade barriers. Meanwhile, the SPS Agreement authorizes health and safety measures but requires alignment with international standards and prohibits discriminatory or unjustified trade restrictions.

2.2. Overview of Vietnam’s agricultural and fishery export

Vietnam's international economic integration has helped its agriculture sector become an important part of the global agricultural value chain. The country is among the top 15 agricultural exporters globally and ranks second in Southeast Asia. From 2017 to 2022, agricultural, forestry, and fishery exports grew from \$36.5 billion to \$53.2 billion (According to Ministry of Industry and Trade). In 2024, the figure for this reached a record high of 62.5 billion USD, up 18.7% compared to 2023. Of which, the export value of agricultural products reached 32.8 billion USD, an increase of 22.4% compared to 2023; the export value of livestock products grew by 6.5% to reach 533.6 million USD and the export value of fishery products reached 10.07 billion USD, up 12.2% (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development). In the first two months of 2025, total exports reached \$9.48 billion, with agricultural products accounting for \$4.89 billion, up 4.5% year-on-year; livestock reached \$72.2 million, rising by 4%; and seafood exports totaled \$1.42 billion, up 18.6% (Chuong Phuong, 2025).

2.2.1. Key agricultural and fishery exports products

Vietnam is one of the world’s leading exporters of various agricultural products, with rice, coffee being outstanding products. Specifically, Vietnam is one of the world’s top rice exporters, particularly from the Mekong River delta with contribution of more than 90%. By 2024, exports reached a record of 9 million tonnes, generating \$5.7 billion in revenue, which showed strong growth (Vietnam+). Another key export product is coffee especially robusta, which helps Vietnam to be the second-largest coffee exporter globally after Brazil. As per VICOFA, during the 2023–2024 coffee crop season (October 2023 to October 2024), Vietnam exported 1.46 million tons of coffee—down 12.1% from the previous season. However, export earnings soared by 33.1%, hitting a record high of \$5.43 billion, the highest revenue ever achieved in a single coffee crop cycle.

The fishery sector is also a major economic driver, with seafood exports reaching \$10

billion in 2024, a 12.7% increase from 2023 (Vietnam+). Shrimp and basa fish are the two major export products, contributing up to 60% of Vietnam's total seafood export turnover (Vietnam Investment Review). Shrimp exports reached about \$4 billion, rising 15% despite global inflation and fierce competition from dominant producing countries such as India, Ecuador, and Indonesia. The basa fish industry rebounded to \$2 billion, up 9%, driven by strong demand from traditional markets such as the US, Brazil, and Colombia. In the first three months of 2025, Vietnam's seafood export revenue reached \$2.45 billion, showing an increase of 26% compared to the same period in 2024 (Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers).

2.2.2. Major export markets

According to Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Phung Duc Tien, Vietnam's main export markets include the US, China, Japan, and the European Union (EU). The United States is Vietnam's largest export partner for agricultural goods, reflecting strong demand for products such as coffee, rice, seafood, vegetables, and fruits. In 2024, the total of U.S. goods imports from Vietnam was \$136.6 billion in 2024, up 19.3 percent (\$22.1 billion) from 2023, indicating the growing importance of this market for Vietnamese agricultural exports (Office of the US Trade Representative). China, despite being a major supplier of agricultural goods to Vietnam, is a crucial market for Vietnamese exports. In 2024, China imported significant volumes of Vietnamese agricultural products, including durian, which alone was worth \$3.4 billion, and other fruits, as well as seafood (Vietnam+). Japan remains a traditional and significant market for Vietnamese agricultural products, particularly coffee, seafood, and processed foods. While total trade with Japan slightly decreased by 1.2% to \$46.0 billion in 2024, agricultural exports to Japan have historically been stable and continue to be a priority for Vietnamese exporters (Vietnam Briefing). The EU is an increasingly important market for Vietnamese agricultural products, including coffee, rice, and seafood. Total trade with the EU reached \$68.8 billion in 2024, an 11.8% increase from 2023 (Vietnam Briefing).

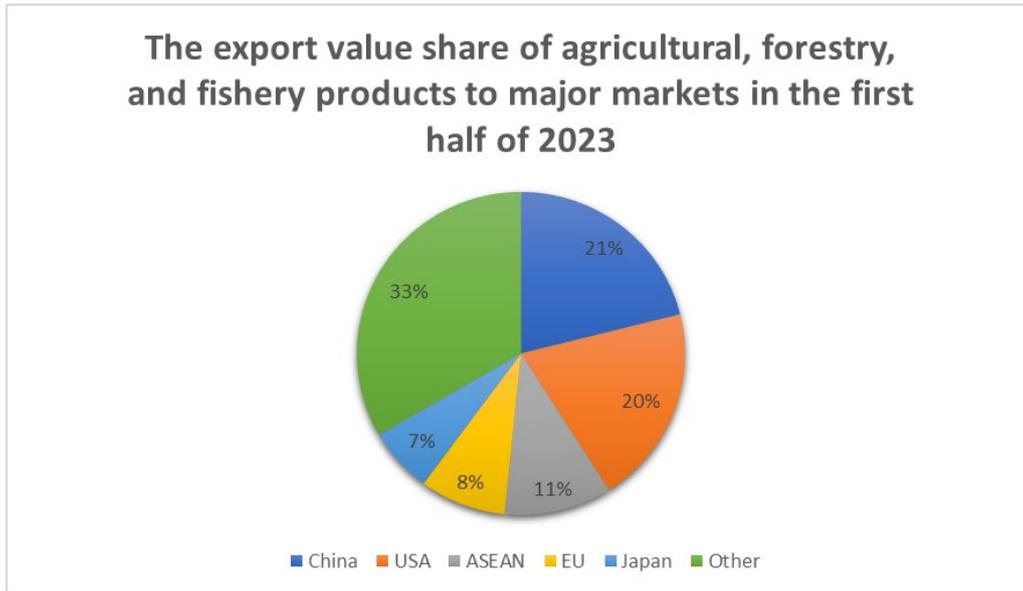


Figure 1: The export value share of agricultural, forestry, and fishery products to major markets in the first half of 2023

Source: Hoàng Anh, 2023.

3. Overview of EU Green Trade Barriers

3.1. Definition

In fact, The European Union (EU) represents the most developed example of strict green trade barriers. These environmental regulations have had a significant effect on imports from numerous countries worldwide, including Vietnam (Nguyen Viet Khoi, Le Thi Thanh Thuy, 2014). There are various types of regulations that the EU has applied to agricultural and fishery products, such as SPS, TBT, The GLOBALG.A.P standard, IUU Regulation, Authorized food additives, etc (Nguyen Viet Khoi, Le Thi Thanh Thuy, 2014). However, to ensure a more systematic and coherent presentation, the authors have classified these regulatory frameworks into three principal categories, including The Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), The Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement, and Environmental and Sustainable Standards.

3.2. Common regulations on agricultural and fishery products

In fact, there are various types of regulations that the EU has applied to agricultural and fishery products, such as SPS, TBT, The GLOBALG.A.P standard, IUU Regulation, Authorized food additives, etc (Nguyen Viet Khoi, Le Thi Thanh Thuy, 2014). However, to ensure a more systematic and coherent presentation, the authors have classified these regulatory frameworks into three principal categories, including The Agreement on the Application of

Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), The Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement, and Environmental and Sustainable Standards.

The Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS): The SPS sets out international guidelines that countries must follow to protect food safety and animal and plant health. Nations use various SPS measures, such as product inspections, limits on pesticide residues, or restrictions on additives, to prevent the spread of diseases and pests and ensure consumer safety. Under the agreement, countries must base their SPS measures on scientific risk assessments and disclose the factors and procedures involved. By promoting transparency and cooperation, the agreement helps ensure fair trade while safeguarding public health and preventing disguised protectionism (WTO). Member States are tasked with ensuring that imports originating from Vietnam meet the European Union's import requirements. In addition, the European Commission oversees overall coordination, conducts inspections and audits of inspection systems, and undertakes the necessary legislative measures to guarantee the consistent application of standards and regulations across the Union's internal market (Official Journal of the European Union, 2020).

The Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement: The Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement aims to prevent unnecessary trade restrictions by ensuring that technical regulations, standards, and conformity assessments are non-discriminatory. While supporting trade facilitation, it also upholds each WTO member's right to pursue legitimate goals such as environmental protection or public health (WTO). Specifically, the EU, through its trade agreements, enhances cooperation on TBT by promoting international standards, risk-based conformity assessments, and supplier declarations for low-risk products. These agreements also emphasize good regulatory practices and greater transparency by ensuring that trading partners are consulted on key regulatory changes (European Commission). The EU also applies this trade barrier to Vietnam, for example, the two parties agree to apply conformity assessment procedures transparently and only as strictly as necessary. They recognize various ways to accept each other's assessment results, like supplier declarations, mutual recognition, share information, promote cooperation, and ensure independence and choice in conformity assessment processes (Official Journal of the European Union, 2020).

Environmental and Sustainable Standards: Environmental and Sustainable Standards are standards aiming at promoting sustainable practices, including Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for Pesticides, Packaging and Waste Regulations, Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated

(IUU) Fishing Regulation, etc. However, only IUU Fishing Regulation will be discussed in this report, which is a significantly common standard. Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing poses significant threats to ocean ecosystems and global fisheries by depleting fish populations, damaging sensitive marine environments, and disrupting fair competition in the seafood market. To tackle these challenges, the European Union introduced a regulation effective from January 1, 2010, which requires that only marine fisheries products accompanied by catch certificates validated by the responsible flag state can enter the EU market (European Commission). In cooperation with Vietnam, both parties actively work together to combat IUU fishing through comprehensive, effective, and transparent measures. They facilitate the exchange of information on IUU activities and implement policies to exclude products linked to IUU fishing from trade flows, strengthening efforts to protect marine resources and promote sustainable fisheries (Official Journal of the European Union, 2020).

In cases where goods imported from outside the EU fail to meet the prescribed regulations, the European Union imposes a series of sanctions. These can range from hefty financial penalties, sometimes amounting to several hundred thousand euros depending on the infraction's seriousness (Europa, 2021) - to outright market bans on the offending items (Tuoi Tre Newspaper, 2025). As an illustration, Vietnam experienced its steepest price decline for off-season durians in 2024 since initiating exports. Comparable issues have affected other farm produce as well; fruit and vegetable shipments dropped 11.3% year-over-year in January, reaching only US\$417 million in export revenue. This downturn is attributed to stricter pesticide residue limits imposed by markets like the United States, Taiwan, and the European Union (Thi Ha, 2025).

4. Challenges of EU Green trade barriers on Vietnam agricultural and fishery export

The EU's green trade barriers, categorized into SPS, TBT, and Environmental and Sustainable Standards (IUU), have posed significant challenges on Vietnam's agricultural and fishery exports. Below, we analyze the challenges posed by the green trade barriers, focusing on key products like coffee, shrimp, and dragon fruit, supported by data to ensure objectivity.

Firstly, the strict requirements of the SPS Agreement, such as limits on pesticide residues and mandatory product inspections, have resulted in substantial hurdles for Vietnamese exporters. In 2024, Vietnam's agricultural products were subject to increased scrutiny, with dragon fruit under a 20% inspection rate upon entry into the EU, with potential for increase to 30% due to pesticide residue concerns (Phan, 2024). Data from the Vietnam SPS Office reveals

that Vietnam received 114 warnings from the EU in 2024 - twice as many as in 2023. SMEs, with limited resources for advanced pest control or testing, encounter shipment delays and financial setbacks. A study on non-tariff measures found that each additional SPS measure decreases Vietnam's export turnover to the EU by 29.8% (Le et al., 2023). Furthermore, the implementation of Decision 534/QĐ-TTg - intended to guide SPS compliance - remains uneven, with only 28.5% of provinces and cities having developed relevant plans (Vietfish Magazine, 2024). Persistent non-compliance threatens long-term EU market access, requiring expensive upgrades to farming and supply chain systems, which divert funds from other growth areas.

Secondly, The TBT Agreement's technical standards and conformity assessments complicate exports of products like coffee and shrimp, raising costs and administrative burdens. Nguyen and Le (2014) report that only 3,000 companies (1.5% of all businesses, 3% in Ho Chi Minh City) hold international certificates like ISO or HACCP, reflecting low compliance capacity. SMEs struggle with stringent packaging and labeling requirements, often facing shipment rejections and penalties due to limited technical expertise. In 2025, the EU issued 12 warnings for violations like misdeclared ingredients and illegal additives, primarily affecting smaller producers (TTWTO VCCI, 2025). These challenges restrict market access and may lead to long-term sector consolidation, as SMEs unable to afford compliance upgrades risk exclusion, reducing Vietnam's supplier diversity and favoring larger firms.

Thirdly, required Environmental and Sustainable Standards have also posed significant challenges for Vietnamese Government and Enterprises. The EU's IUU Regulation, effective since 2010, has significantly impacted Vietnam's shrimp and fishery exports. In 2017, Vietnam received a "yellow card" warning from the EU for insufficient efforts to combat IUU fishing, causing increased scrutiny of fishery products export. This led to a 12% reduction, equivalent to US\$183.5 million in seafood export values to the EU in 2019 (TTWTO VCCI, 2024). Additionally, only 82.5% of fishing boats were registered by August 2023, complicating traceability efforts (Nguyen, 2024).

Enforcement remains inconsistent across provinces. For instance, six out of 28 coastal provinces have yet to establish local fisheries surveillance forces, leading to uneven management and sanctioning of violations. In October 2023, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development highlighted that nearly 60% of violations in various provinces had not been adequately addressed, indicating a lack of seriousness in implementing anti-IUU

measures (Nguyen, 2024). The requirement for catch certificates has also increased administrative costs and delayed shipments, particularly for small-scale fishers. Continued compliance with EU regulations, such as advanced traceability systems and monitoring technology, is essential to maintain market access.

In summary, the EU green trade barriers present multifaceted challenges that extend beyond the technicalities of the SPS Agreement, TBT Agreement, and IUU Regulation. These standards, while aiming to promote environmental sustainability and consumer safety, have created significant compliance burdens for Vietnam's agricultural and fishery sectors—especially for small and medium-sized enterprises. The pressure to meet stringent requirements in pesticide control, product traceability, packaging, and sustainability certification has exposed structural weaknesses in Vietnam's regulatory enforcement, infrastructure, and farmer-level capacity. More broadly, these trade barriers reflect a shift in global trade dynamics where environmental and ethical considerations are becoming central to market access.

5. Vietnam government & Industry responses and their positive impacts

5.1. Strengthening Compliance with Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures

The Data from the Vietnam SPS Office reveals that Vietnam received 114 warnings from the EU in 2024—twice as many as in 2023. A key contributing factor is that many businesses have yet to fully update themselves on the latest regulations. According to Mr. Le Thanh Hoa, Deputy Director of the Department of Quality, Processing, and Market Development, updating and disseminating new EU regulations is a top priority. To support this effort, the SPS Office is developing a national information portal to provide timely updates for businesses, cooperatives, and local authorities, enabling them to better navigate regulatory changes and reduce export-related risks. Moreover, the Vietnamese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) has implemented a project to expand VietGAP - standard agricultural production to 10 million hectares by 2030. The project's objectives include improving Vietnam's capacity in implementing its obligations under the WTO and FTA's SPS Agreements, developing appropriate SPS measures to protect health, and enhancing management, assessment, and testing capacities to support enterprises in complying with SPS regulations in export markets.

By 2025, the project aims to certify 3 million hectares of forests, 30,000 hectares of aquaculture, and 15,000 livestock facilities under VietGAP standards. Additionally, the project seeks to increase the percentage of semi-processed and processed agricultural, forestry, and

fishery product establishments obtaining HACCP and ISO 22000 or equivalent certificates by 10-15% per year, and to inform and update about 80% of cooperatives on SPS regulations of import markets (vietnamnews, 2021).

5.2. Addressing Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)

Under the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), Vietnam has committed to aligning its technical regulations with international standards to facilitate trade. This includes adopting international standards such as those developed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the Codex Alimentarius Commission as a basis for their technical regulations, except when such standards are ineffective or inappropriate for the objectives pursued. Additionally, Vietnam has agreed to assess the impact of proposed technical regulations and consider non-regulatory alternatives, aiming to increase convergence with relevant international standards.

In terms of enterprises, many Vietnamese businesses have demonstrated that their products—such as cashew nuts, coffee, vegetables, dragon fruit, and litchi—meet EU standards and align with the preferences of European consumers (Nguyen, T.T.H., et al., 2022). A lot of exporters are adopting international standards such as GLOBALG.A.P, HACCP, and ISO 22000 to meet EU requirements. For example, one of the successful models in applying GLOBALG.A.P is the fruit farms in Van Du town (Thanh Hoa). With large-scale operations and the application of modern technology, these farms have produced high-quality products that are favored by the market. Mr. Nguyen Van Thanh, the owner of a farm growing yellow-fleshed oranges and green-skinned pomelos, shared that producing under GLOBALG.A.P not only helps crops grow healthily and reduces pests and diseases, but also ensures consistent quality, resulting in sweet, fragrant fruits that meet export standards. In particular, this process also contributes to environmental protection and the health of the producers themselves (baothanhhoa, 2025). By applying the GLOBALG.A.P in agricultural production, Vietnam can boost the global competitiveness of its agricultural sector, ensure food safety, support sustainability, and uplift farmer livelihoods.

5.3. Combating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing

The Government has ordered harsh punishments on any violation of vessel-monitoring-system (VMS) rules in a move to get the European Commission (EC)'s “yellow card” against the Vietnamese seafood products for illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing lifted (VietnamPlus, 2024a). As of August 2021, 26,915 fishing vessels (or 87.45% of the total) had been equipped with VMS and were being monitored by the Directorate of Fisheries. Among

these, 3,000 vessels in 28 coastal provinces and cities were fitted with satellite-based VMS systems under the Movimar project, a cooperation initiative between Vietnam and France. Vietnam has established a central vessel monitoring network, with two satellite-based monitoring centers located in Hai Phong and Ba Ria - Vung Tau. These allow for real-time tracking of fishing vessels, detection of violations, and assistance in emergency situations (VietnamPlus, 2022). These initiatives aim to align Vietnam's fisheries sector with international standards and facilitate the lifting of the EU's "yellow card" warning.

The Vietnam's seafood industry has also proactively adopted digital traceability systems to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and align with EU regulations. The Electronic Catch Documentation and Traceability (eCDT) system has been implemented across 80 fishing ports and boarding points in coastal provinces and cities. This digital tool enhances transparency and legality in certifying the origin of domestic fishing, meeting European Commission requirements (VietnamPlus, 2024b). In Kien Giang province, 679 fishing vessel owners have registered for eCDT VN accounts. The system has logged 820 vessel departures and 232 arrivals, facilitating effective management over local fishing fleets and catch volumes (Vietnam Agriculture News, 2024).

In conclusion, while the aforementioned measures have shown progress, challenges remain, particularly in ensuring widespread SME compliance and fully meeting evolving EU standards. Continued investment in technology, regulatory transparency, and capacity-building will be crucial for Vietnam to secure long-term market access, enhance export competitiveness, and achieve sustainable agricultural and fishery growth. The success of these efforts will determine whether Vietnam can fully overcome EU green trade barriers and solidify its position as a reliable supplier in the global market

6. Recommendation

To address the challenges and harness the opportunities presented by the EU's green trade barriers, including SPS, TBT, and Environmental and Sustainable Standards (IUU), Vietnam must adopt targeted strategies across multiple stakeholders.

6.1. Recommendations for the Vietnamese government

Firstly, to mitigate the high compliance costs associated with the SPS and TBT Agreements and avoid market exclusion, the Vietnamese government should establish a national support framework to improve compliance infrastructure. This includes expanding the SPS Vietnam Office's role to provide subsidized training and certification support for

SMEs, focusing on pesticide residue management and quality control for export commodities such as dragon fruit, shrimp, and coffee. A national fund, supported by both domestic and international sources, should cover certification costs (estimated at USD 5,000–7,000 per farm) to ensure broader participation by SMEs (Nguyen and Le, 2014).

Secondly, to comply with the EU’s IUU regulations and address the existing “yellow card” warning, the government should continue investing in vessel monitoring systems (VMS) and traceability technologies. These investments help ensure transparency in fisheries and reduce the risk of export bans. Moreover, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development should lead the creation of a task force that conducts regular audits to proactively detect and resolve non-compliance issues.

Thirdly, the government should promote the adoption of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), including selected implementation of GLOBALG.A.P for SPS and TBT compliance. To incentivize this, policymakers can consider offering progressive tax breaks to certified producers. These initiatives would support standardization, improve quality, and align with global sustainability expectations, enhancing Vietnam’s competitiveness in premium EU markets.

6.2. Recommendations for Vietnamese enterprises and farmers

Firstly, Vietnamese enterprises, particularly SMEs and agricultural producers, need to build internal capacity to comply with SPS and TBT standards. This includes adopting cost-effective technologies such as integrated pest management systems, improved processing techniques, and better post-harvest handling.

Secondly, small-scale fishers and aquaculture operators should be supported with targeted training programs to improve technical skills related to catch documentation and the use of VMS equipment. This will contribute directly to IUU compliance and help safeguard access to the EU seafood market.

Thirdly, businesses should implement internal quality control systems that ensure consistent compliance with EU standards, reducing the risk of rejected shipments. This is especially urgent in light of recent reports about Vietnamese seafood being denied entry due to non-compliance (Vietnam News, 2024).

Fourthly, producers should focus on standardizing production and minimizing post-harvest losses to respond to increasing EU demand for sustainable, high-quality products. Maintaining reliability and traceability in production chains will be essential to long-term

market success.

6.3. Recommendations for international partners

Firstly, development partners, especially from the EU, should provide financial and technical assistance to help Vietnamese SMEs overcome compliance barriers under the SPS and TBT Agreements. This includes support for sustainable farming methods and product traceability systems.

Secondly, international funding should continue to aid Vietnam's fisheries sector by improving IUU compliance through expanded VMS infrastructure and better traceability mechanisms. Continued support is critical to help Vietnam maintain and build on post-2024 reforms.

Thirdly, international partners should engage in bilateral negotiations with Vietnam to provide transitional periods for regulatory adaptation. This flexible approach would help Vietnamese exporters adjust to new EU regulations more gradually and avoid abrupt disruptions.

Fourthly, international organizations should expand collaboration programs such as training workshops, technology transfer initiatives, and sustainable agriculture development projects. These programs can promote precision agriculture, organic input use, and resilient supply chains.

Lastly, EU-based organizations and donors can support trade promotion efforts through international fairs and B2B platforms. These efforts would boost exposure for Vietnamese exporters, strengthen long-term trade partnerships, and reduce dependency on volatile market segments or competitors like Thailand and India.

7. Conclusion

The EU's green trade barriers pose both challenges and opportunities for Vietnam's agricultural and fishery exports. These regulations increase compliance costs and reduce export efficiency but also drive improvements in product quality and market competitiveness. In response, Vietnam has enhanced its standards and policies—such as promoting GAP, preventing illegal fishing, supporting organic farming, and strengthening supply chain traceability.

To seize these opportunities, Vietnam must modernize its agricultural sector, foster public-private partnerships, and boost capacity building. Strategic cooperation with the EU is essential for aligning with global sustainability standards. By addressing these barriers proactively,

Vietnam can sustain its export growth and advance both environmental and economic goals.

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