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The Untold Victims of China's Trade Policies

China's trade policies have come under intense scrutiny amid the ongoing US-China trade war. Yet with attention focused on trade conflict between the United States and China, the wider effects of China's trade policies are being largely ignored.

The debate about China's trading practices has been driven primarily by the United States and other advanced economies such as the EU and Japan. These countries have complained that China is using state subsidies and other unfair trading practices to give its firms and industries an edge in global markets and tilt the playing field in its favor. From steel to semiconductors, attention has overwhelmingly focused on the policies that China is using to promote the expansion of its manufacturing and high-tech industries including heavy subsidies, forced technology transfer, and intellectual property violations. In these sectors, China's policies pose a serious competitive threat to the US and other advanced-industrialized states.

What has been widely overlooked, however, is that China is also making use of highly trade-distorting policies in other sectors that are of significant concern to developing countries. While China is primarily seen as a manufacturing powerhouse, it has also emerged as a major power in global agriculture markets and the world's dominant fishing power. What is more, over the last decade, China has become the world's largest subsidizer of both agriculture and fisheries. Given China's aggregate economic might and newfound centrality in both global agriculture and fisheries, the effects of its trade policies are felt worldwide. Likewise, since many

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developing countries depend heavily on these sectors for exports, incomes, and food security, China's policies have profound implications for the developing world.

President Xi Jinping has sought to portray China as a champion of global development, pursuing a "win-win" form of economic globalization that benefits all countries. In reality, however, China's protectionist trade policies are exacerbating hardship in some of the world's poorest countries. At the same time, Beijing has persistently undermined efforts to establish new global trade rules on agriculture and fisheries at the World Trade Organization (WTO), rules that are of crucial importance to much of the developing world.

China has become the world's largest subsidizer of both agriculture and fisheries

China's Booming Agricultural Subsidies

Agricultural subsidies have long been seen as a symbol of the injustice of the international trading system.[1] Subsidies provided by richer countries give their farmers an unfair advantage in global markets, making it difficult, if not impossible, for farmers who don't receive such subsidies to compete. In addition, subsidies also artificially depress global prices. The result is a double blow that undermines the livelihoods of millions of poor farmers in the developing world, who face both heavily subsidized competition and lower global prices for the commodities they produce.[2] There is widespread consensus that reducing global agricultural subsidies would boost incomes and reduce poverty in developing countries.[3]

In the past, the vast majority of agricultural subsidies were provided by rich countries like the US, EU, and Japan, while developing country governments generally lacked the resources to subsidize their agricultural producers.[4] But over the past two decades, as China has grown richer, its level of support to its agriculture sector has increased dramatically—with the result that it is now the world's biggest subsidizer.[5] The Chinese government provides over $200 billion in subsidies and other forms of trade-distorting support to its farmers each year, vastly more than the EU ($100 billion), US ($33 billion), or any other country.[6]

China has emerged as a major agro-power: it is now the world's largest agricultural producer as well as consumer, and fourth largest exporter.[7] Although the commodities it subsidizes are primarily sold in the domestic market rather than exported, both due to the scale of its subsidies and because China is such a large import market, its policies have significant implications for global markets and trade. China's subsidies increase its domestic agricultural production, which has the effect of both displacing imports from the Chinese market as well as lowering global prices, causing farm incomes in other countries to fall.[8]

Beijing claims that its agricultural subsidies are intended to foster rural development and combat high levels of rural-urban inequality. Despite China's manufacturing boom and the rapid growth of its cities, nearly 40 percent of the country's population remains rural, with a quarter of the workforce employed in agriculture.[9] The income gap between urban and rural households in China is among the largest in the world, with average incomes three times higher in urban than rural areas.[10] The Communist Party views these high levels of urban-rural inequality as politically destabilizing and a potential threat to maintaining its grip on power.

Yet, if Beijing is genuinely interested in supporting its rural population and raising incomes, there are alternative policy tools that it could use to achieve those objectives without the harmful spillover effects that its subsidies have for other developing countries.[11] These include providing direct income payments to farmers delinked from production, and investing in rural health care, education, and social security.

Instead, however, the primary goal of China's subsidies is to boost its domestic agricultural production.[12] The Chinese government has established targets for achieving self-sufficiency in commodities that it deems strategically important, including food staples.[13] Its objective is to reduce reliance on imports, which it sees as a source of vulnerability. In other words, trade distortion is not an incidental effect of China's subsidies but their central purpose.

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This runs counter to the trend in most countries. Across the OECD group of primarily advanced-industrialized states, agricultural subsidies have not only fallen steadily over the past two decades, but these countries have also reformed their farm support programs to make them significantly less trade distorting, thereby minimizing the harmful spillover effects for farmers elsewhere.[14] China's subsidies, in contrast, are specifically designed to incentivize its farmers to produce more. They include government purchases of crops at subsidized prices, direct payments based on production, and input subsidies, all of which serve to increase production volumes—and are thus highly trade distorting in nature.[15]

Although the Chinese government claims that its subsidies are meant to benefit peasant farmers, in fact the majority of the country's crop and livestock production is now under the control of large, domestic agribusiness companies, known as "dragon head" enterprises.[16] Due to the design of China's subsidies, which are tied to production volumes, the benefits overwhelmingly accrue not to peasant farmers but to China's booming agribusiness industry.

Chinese officials insist that, as a developing country, its subsidies are "morally different" from those of the US or EU.[17] However, from the perspective of global markets or poor farmers in the developing world, it doesn't matter where the subsidies are coming from. Whether from China or an OECD country, the impact is the same. Both the Chinese market and its subsidies have reached such a large scale that its policies have a significant impact on the rest of the world.

For many developing countries, agriculture is a key economic sector—their biggest employer and a major source of exports. Reducing global agricultural subsidies is therefore a pressing concern for much of the developing world, seen as a critical means to improve welfare and livelihoods. Subsidies provided by the US, EU, and other developed countries certainly remain part of the problem. In fact, US agricultural subsidies increased under President Trump, as he sought to offset the harm to American farmers caused by the US-China trade war he initiated.[18] But the source of the agricultural subsidy problem—and its solution—no longer rests solely with rich countries like the US and EU. As the world's largest subsidizer, any effort to reign in global agricultural subsidies needs to include China.

Since the collapse of the Doha Round of trade negotiations in 2011, states have been seeking to negotiate a standalone WTO agreement to reduce global agricultural subsidies. Importantly, the traditional big subsidizers, such as the United States, have all indicated that they are willing to agree to significant reductions in their subsidies.[19] But the negotiations have reached an impasse over China's subsidies. The Chinese government has refused to accept *any* new disciplines on its agricultural subsidies at the WTO. Beijing wants to maximize its policy flexibility, not only to maintain its current level of subsidies, but possibly even to increase them in the future. For developing countries, the failure to conclude a WTO agreement to reign in global agricultural subsidies is a major blow.

The New King of Cotton

Cotton provides a striking illustration of how China's trade policies are worsening the plight of some of the world's poorest farmers. A range of actors—from international development organizations like Oxfam to the World Bank—have highlighted the devastating effects of cotton subsidies for millions of poor farmers in the developing world, prompting calls for stricter global WTO rules to eliminate such subsidies.[20]

The global campaign to reduce cotton subsidies has often been characterized as a David-and-Goliath-like struggle by some of the world's poorest farmers against the world's richest and most powerful countries. The US—historically the world's biggest cotton subsidizer—was once seen as the chief source of the problem.[21] But as with agricultural subsidies more broadly, China has surpassed the US as the world's largest cotton subsidizer. Over the past decade, China provided $41 billion in cotton subsidies—nearly six times more than the $7 billion provided by the United States. China alone now accounts for nearly three-quarters of all cotton subsidies worldwide.[22]

Cotton is of crucial importance to the Cotton-4 (C-4) group of West African cotton producers (Mali, Chad, Benin, and Burkina Faso), as well as many other developing and least-developed countries in Africa and throughout the world.[23] These countries depend heavily on cotton exports for employment, government revenue, and foreign exchange. Cotton is one of the most important export crops in sub-Saharan Africa, with some 15 million people directly dependent on it for their livelihoods.[24] Burkina Faso, for example, which has an average income of just $790 per year, relies on cotton for 59 percent of its export revenues.[25] African cotton producers are among the world's most competitive, but the subsidies provided by more affluent countries leave them struggling to compete in global markets.[26] If cotton subsidies were eliminated to create a level playing field, there would be a significant shift in cotton production to African countries, whose farmers would enjoy higher prices and incomes.

Today, however, cotton prices depend more on decisions made in Beijing than Washington. The world cotton market now revolves around China, which is the site of over half the world's textile production.[27] Given its extraordinary market power, cotton farmers around the world are at the mercy of Chinese government policy. Like the US, China is a relatively inefficient cotton producer, with production costs roughly four times those of some African countries.[28] But subsidies and other trade measures have made China one of the world's largest cotton producers. China's subsidies artificially increase its own cotton production, displacing imports and driving down global prices, thereby reducing the incomes of farmers elsewhere around the world.

In addition, China uses tariffs as high as 40 percent to restrict cotton imports.[29] Given the importance of its market and the high tariffs it imposes, if Beijing were to allow cotton from least-developed countries to enter its market duty free, it would provide a significant boost to African cotton producers. However, while the Chinese government has offered some Duty-Free Quota-Free (DFQF) access to Least Developed Countries (LDCs), it excluded many of their most important exports including cotton.[30] When LDCs requested at the WTO that China expand DFQF access to cover cotton, the Chinese government refused.

China's heavy subsidies and import barriers cause significant hardship to poorer and weaker countries. While China remains a developing country, it is vastly richer than the C-4 countries, with a per capita GDP of over $10,000 compared to an average of just $900 among the C-4.[31] Beijing claims that its cotton subsidies are intended to support peasant farmers and boost rural incomes. In reality, however, China's subsidies are driven by political and strategic motives, specifically targeted at encouraging cotton production in the northwestern region of Xinjiang. More than 85 percent of China's cotton production is located in Xinjiang where large, government-owned or operated cotton farms dominate.[32] Xinjiang is home to China's Muslim Uighur minority, and most cotton there is grown by the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), a paramilitary agro-industrial conglomerate that was established to pacify and "Sinicize" the region.

Appropriating land and water from the local Uighur population, the XPCC employs and resettles Han Chinese workers brought in from other parts of the country.[33] The XPCC controls vast tracts of land and has been an important part of the Chinese government's strategy for asserting its dominance over the territory and the Uighur population, over 1 million of whom have been imprisoned in mass internment camps. The XPCC has been sanctioned by the US Treasury Department for severe human rights violations and abuses, including using forced prison labor to work in the cotton fields, as well as throughout the cotton and apparel supply chains in Xinjiang.

China's cotton subsidies are part of the government's efforts to exert internal control over Xinjiang

Farms operating under the umbrella of the XPCC produce around a third of all cotton grown in China.[34] Channeled toward Xinjiang and entities like the XPCC, China's cotton subsidies are part of the government's efforts to exert internal control over the region, which also has strategic significance as a key hub of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), intended to create trade and infrastructure links to Central Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

The C-4 and other African countries have been actively pushing for a new pact at the WTO to eliminate harmful cotton subsidies. However, Beijing has fiercely resisted any restrictions on its subsidies, identifying this as a red line on which it is unwilling to budge. The Chinese government continues to insist that all blame for the cotton problem lies solely with the United States, and that as a developing country it is on the same side as the African countries and LDCs in fighting against US subsidies.

It is true that US subsidies undoubtedly remain part of the problem. However, since US subsidies—and their impact on global markets—have come to be dwarfed by China, it is clearly no longer enough just to go after US subsidies.

China is now the primary source of the cotton problem. But it has thwarted efforts to secure a WTO cotton agreement by refusing to accept any disciplines on its subsidies. Its unwillingness to participate in global subsidy reform efforts makes a meaningful agreement on cotton impossible.

Fishy Business

China's massive subsidies for its fishing industry are proving similarly harmful to other developing countries. Subsidies have contributed to a global fisheries crisis by fueling overcapacity and overfishing—too many vessels chasing too few fish—leading to the decimation of global fish stocks and plummeting fish harvests.[35] The UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that 90 percent of global fish stocks are already fully exploited and almost a third are being fished at a biologically unsustainable level.[36]

Subsidies allow fleets to intensify and broaden the scope of their fishing, building and operating larger boats that can travel greater distances and remain at sea for longer periods, in order to fish in the high seas or in the national exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of other states.[37] It is estimated that more than half of current global fishing activity in the high seas would not exist without subsidies.[38] Overcapacity fueled by subsidies has also resulted in high rates of illegal fishing by foreign fleets which, due to a lack of enforcement capacity, affects developing countries most heavily.[39]

> **Propelled by subsidies, overfishing causes severe damage to fragile marine ecosystems and food security**

Propelled by subsidies, overfishing causes severe damage to fragile marine ecosystems and undermines the sustainability of global fisheries. But this is not just an environmental issue. Many coastal and island developing countries depend heavily on fisheries for food security, employment and livelihoods, and are therefore acutely vulnerable to plummeting fish harvests.[40] Subsidies have enabled countries with large industrial fishing fleets to exploit resources far beyond their own waters at the expense of local fishing communities. For these communities, competition from heavily subsidized foreign fishing fleets has been devastating.[41]

Until the late 2000s, the EU and Japan were considered the worst offenders.[42] But China now dominates the global fishing industry. Fueled by heavy subsidies, China has developed the world's largest industrial fishing fleet, and become the largest fisheries producer and exporter.[43] As with agriculture and cotton, China is now the world's largest subsidizer of fisheries by far. China alone accounts for more than 20 percent of all harmful fisheries subsidies worldwide. It spends more than $6 billion annually on such subsidies, nearly three times more than the next largest subsidizer, the EU.[44]

Until the late 1990s, the growth of China's fishing industry was driven primarily by fishing in its own territorial waters, with the government providing substantial support to fishing communities and companies to expand and intensify their activities. But subsidies led to excess capacity and overfishing, with the result that fish stocks plummeted. Most of China's own fisheries resources are now heavily depleted. Consequently, in its own domestic waters, Chinese policy shifted toward efforts to conserve and restore its fishery resources, including strictly restricting fishing. Eager to maintain employment on fishing boats and in processing plants, and having severely damaged its own fish stocks, the Chinese government shifted to providing heavy subsidies—for fuel, shipbuilding and processing—to enable its fleet to expand into international waters.[45]

China's heavily-subsidized fleet now accounts for an astonishing 42 percent of global fishing activity—outstripping the next ten biggest countries combined.[46] China has nearly 17,000 vessels engaged in distant water fishing—to put this in perspective, the US, the world's third largest fishing country, has only 225 such vessels.[47]

Most of China's distant water fishing activity would be unprofitable without subsidies.[48] Fuel subsidies, for instance, enable China's fishing fleet to travel vast distances cheaply and, with refueling at sea, remain at sea for long periods of time—some boats for as long as two years. Propelled by such subsidies, China's fleet has expanded far beyond its own territorial waters, operating intensively off the coasts of West Africa, Central and South America, and the Pacific Islands.[49]

The same dynamics of overcapacity present in other Chinese industrial sectors, such as steel, are evident in the fishing industry. Subsidies have led to massive overcapacity in China's fishing sector, and China is now effectively seeking to "export" its overcapacity by providing subsidies to support intensive fishing operations far from its own shores. In the fisheries sector, though, China's response to overcapacity has put immense pressure on fragile marine ecosystems, threatening the sustainability of global fisheries resources upon which large parts of the world's population depend.

For many coastal and island developing countries, the impact has been devastating, with small-scale fishers being squeezed out of their livelihoods. China's industrial fishing fleet now dominates in the waters off West Africa, for example.[50] The region has some of the world's richest fishing grounds, but its fish stocks are rapidly being depleted by industrial trawlers. Locals fishing from hand-hewn canoes are competing against Chinese "mega-trawlers" with mile-long nets that sweep up everything from seabed to surface.

Diminishing fish stocks have resulted in plummeting incomes for local fisherfolk and reduced domestic food supply—in countries that already suffer from high levels of hunger and food insecurity. Overfishing by the Chinese fleet has been similarly documented in other regions, along with considerable evidence of illegal fishing.[51]

China's fishing subsidies serve both economic and geopolitical objectives. Identified as a strategic industry, Beijing has made the continued expansion of its distant water fishery a key national policy goal.[52] At a regional level, China is using its heavily-subsidized fishing fleet to bolster its maritime claims in the East and South China Seas, with subsidies enabling China's "fishing militia" to purchase larger boats and travel further into disputed territory such as the Spratly, Paracel, and Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.[53] China's fishing militia has, for instance, driven away thousands of Filipino fishers from the rich fishing grounds around the Spratly Islands. At the global level, by encouraging the aggressive outward expansion of its industrial fishing fleet across the world's oceans, China's subsidies are intended to support its objective of becoming a "Great Ocean Power." This includes providing large volumes of subsidies to further expand its distant water fishing operations including for building, modernizing and upgrading vessels to further increase the overall capacity of its fleet; constructing overseas fishing "bases," which provide port, processing and logistics facilities for its fishing fleet; and increasing exploration and exploitation of previously untapped fisheries resources, such as in ecologically-fragile Antarctica.[54] While other countries with large industrial fishing fleets undeniably share responsibility for the global fisheries crisis through their own overfishing, China is now by far the most significant contributor due to the sheer size and scope of its global fishing operations. And it is developing and less-developed countries that feel the effects of this crisis most acutely.

Developing countries have led efforts to secure a WTO agreement to eliminate harmful fisheries subsidies. The 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals identified such an agreement as a major international priority. WTO negotiators are seeking to reach a global fisheries agreement by the next WTO Ministerial Meeting in June 2022, with the goal of achieving a "triple win"—an outcome that is positive for trade, development and the environment. As one of the sole active areas of multilateral negotiations at the WTO, achieving a successful agreement is seen as essential to demonstrating the institution's continued relevance. But as the largest subsidizer, a meaningful agreement is simply not possible without China's participation. And here too, as in the agriculture and cotton negotiations, China has repeatedly sought to undermine and evade restrictions on its ability to subsidize its fishing industry.

Don’t Poke the Dragon

China’s agriculture and fisheries subsidies are contributing to the immiseration of farmers and fishers in poorer countries. Yet many of these countries are highly reluctant to challenge China or call out its trading practices. For many developing countries, China is now their largest export market, as well as an increasingly important source of foreign aid and investment. Given their growing dependence on China, there is widespread fear that antagonizing Beijing by criticizing its trading practices could provoke retaliation.

This is hardly an unrealistic fear. The immense size of China’s domestic market has enabled it to increasingly use trade as an instrument of economic coercion against much bigger, more economically resilient states. Most recently, for instance, China blocked imports from Australia in retaliation for its calls for an independent inquiry into the origins of the Covid-19 outbreak, as well as due to Canberra’s complaints about Chinese Communist Party interference in Australia’s domestic politics. China is Australia’s largest trading partner, accounting for nearly 40 percent of the country’s exports. Beijing’s import curbs—covering a lengthy list of goods including coal, copper, timber, wine, beer, cotton, barley, beef, lamb, lobster, sugar, wheat, and wool—were intended to inflict maximum economic pain across Australia’s key export industries.

Similarly, China recently blocked imports from Canada—and arbitrarily imprisoned two Canadian citizens—in retaliation for its participation in the extradition of a Huawei executive to face fraud charges in the United States. Targeting Canada’s major agricultural exports, including pork, beef, soybeans and canola, the restrictions cost the country an estimated $4 billion in lost exports.[55]

If even middle powers like Canada and Australia, which are among the world’s largest economies, are being targeted with punitive economic measures for running afoul of Beijing, it is no wonder that smaller and more vulnerable countries are afraid to speak out against China’s trade policies. To date, Beijing has used the threat and imposition of trade restrictions to punish over a dozen countries for various perceived affronts including Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the Philippines, Taiwan, Mongolia, and the United Kingdom. Such measures are in blatant violation of the rules and principles of the WTO. But global trade rules are proving increasingly inadequate to address China’s trading practices.

Global trade rules are proving increasingly inadequate to address China’s trading practices

Powerful actors like the US complain openly—and loudly—about the effects of China’s trade policies on their workers, firms and industries. However, the freedom to criticize China's policies is becoming a privilege reserved for the rich and powerful. Those who lack their economic and political might are increasingly forced to suffer in silence.

Behind closed doors, developing country officials and trade negotiators are frank in expressing their concerns about China's trade policies. But they are extremely reluctant to voice these concerns publicly. As a WTO negotiator from one developing country, who insisted on anonymity, put it: "There's only one country here that criticizes China and that's the US. The smaller you get, the more polite you are to China."[56]

Developing countries have little fear of confronting the US or EU—liberal democracies where public debate about government policy, whether in the realm of trade or any other area, is the norm—and indeed are highly vocal in calling out the hypocrisy of their unfair trade policies. But those same developing countries do not want to be seen as criticizing China, an authoritarian regime that is increasingly trying to suppress debate about its policies, not only internally but also abroad. As a result, within the WTO and other trade forums, developing countries have, for the most part, voiced concerns about China's subsidies and other trade policies only obliquely. They decry the effects of subsidized competition in agriculture and fisheries, for instance, without specifying the source of those subsidies, or insist that "big subsidizers" need to reduce their subsidies, without naming China directly.

A frank and inclusive debate about the effects of China's trade policies has been missing—even from the WTO, whose very purpose is to provide a forum to scrutinize and debate the trade policies of states. As long as weaker countries fear reprisals from China, an open debate about its trade policies is impossible.

The Strong Do What They Will

Dispensing large sums of aid and investment abroad through the BRI and other channels, China has sought to portray itself as a beneficent leader of efforts to combat global poverty and foster development. At the same time, amid the US assault on the rules-based multilateral trading system under President Trump, China sought to portray itself as an emerging new defender of globalization and free trade. These claims are belied, however, by the reality of China's protectionist trade policies, and the harmful effects they are having on other developing countries.

With the debate about China's trade policies dominated by the world's richest and most powerful economies, the voices of developing countries have been largely absent. Yet, this does not mean that China's policies are not affecting these countries. On the contrary, in the agriculture and fisheries sectors, the damaging effects of China's trade policies are felt most keenly by other developing countries. Given its enormous market power, as well as the massive volume of subsidies that it is providing, China's trade policies have major consequences for global development.

> The damaging effects of China's trade policies are felt most keenly by other developing countries

To be clear, this is not to let the United States and other rich countries off the hook. But the harmful effects of agricultural and fisheries subsidies on developing countries can no longer be addressed simply by tackling the policies of rich countries like the US, EU and Japan. As the world's largest subsidizer, efforts to reform global subsidies need to include China. While China remains a developing country in terms of its per capita GDP, its status as the world's second largest economy means that its trade policies have profound global implications.

China frequently professes to be working in solidarity with developing countries to challenge the injustices of the global trading system. In actual fact, however, it is increasingly Beijing's trade policies that are proving the biggest threat to other developing countries. Rather than simply trying to hide behind its developing country identity, China must show greater accountability for the effects of its policies on poorer and weaker developing countries. What these countries need is not just abstract expressions of developing world solidarity but concrete and meaningful commitments by China to reduce its subsidies.

New fault lines are emerging in global trade politics. Without tackling China's subsidies and other harmful trading practices, any effort to improve the plight of poor farmers and fishers globally is doomed to failure. Given their difficulties in confronting China directly, developing countries need support from more powerful states in their efforts to secure new and stronger WTO agreements to reign in harmful agricultural and fisheries subsidies.

The US can play an important role in this, by working with developing countries to increase the pressure on China to reform its subsidies. While the United States is working closely with the EU and Japan in the Trilateral Initiative, which seeks to reform WTO rules to better address China's industrial subsidies, it has neglected the opportunity to form broader alliances across the North-South divide. This would, of course, require the United States to demonstrate its willingness to address its own trade-distorting subsidies in areas such as agriculture. But doing so makes sense for both strategic and commercial reasons. As the world's largest agricultural exporter, the US has a keen interest in reducing China's subsidies. The United States also has an interest in tackling environmentally harmful, capacity-enhancing fisheries subsidies: the US is a comparatively small user of fisheries subsidies and most of its subsidies are environmentally-beneficial (such as those for fisheries management and conservation), placing its fleet at a competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis the big subsidizers.

In recent years, however, the US has been largely missing in action at the WTO. Under the Trump Administration, the US abdicated its traditional leadership role at the WTO, abandoning trade multilateralism in favor of aggressive unilateralism and launching an assault on the institution's dispute settlement mechanism.[57] These actions did immense damage to the US's international standing and reputation. And the resulting leadership gap at the WTO has made progress in any area of negotiations virtually impossible. Allying with developing countries to push for meaningful and ambitious agreements on agriculture, cotton and fisheries would be a powerful symbol of renewed American leadership in the trading system and show that the era of "America First" is over. It would demonstrate that the United States is seeking not only to advance its own narrow trade interests, but to make the system fairer and more responsive to the needs of all countries.

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