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World food system restructuring under a GATT regime

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Abstract

The current Uruguay Round of the GATT has a new emphasis on the liberalization of agricultural trade. This essay discusses the significance of this new emphasis, arguing that while the formal issues of agricultural re-regulation are necessary to stabilize international trade, the liberalization thrust has a broader significance. Substantively, the GATT may in fact institutionalize a new regime of global accumulation in a world economy privileging transnational companies. Such a regime is already evident in a state system governed increasingly by the dictates of supranational institutions like the IMF and the international banks. The restructuring of Southern states via IMF conditionalities and world market competitive pressures encourages a new export-platform pattern. Major agricultural exports supply specialty crops to agro-industrial processors and high-value food markets across the world, at the expense of domestic food security. While formally the GATT negotiations may have a multilateral appearance, substantively they stand to intensify new global hierarchies both within and between states.



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