

# **The Impact of the European Union - Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) On Exporting Agricultural Products from Vietnam to European Union (EU)**

**Nguyen Hai Toan<sup>1</sup>, Phan Thi Lien<sup>2</sup>, Pham Thu Huong<sup>3</sup>, Pham Huy Hoang<sup>4</sup>, Nguyen Nhat Duy<sup>5</sup>,**

**Vu Quang Hai<sup>6</sup>**

*Hanoi University of Natural Resources and Environment, Vietnam*

**Abstract:** This study focuses on analysing the impact of EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) on exporting agricultural products from Vietnam to EU. The signing of this agreement is considered to be positive to Vietnam with the advantage of exporting agricultural products. The study uses quantitative research through SMART model with data about export and import turnover of agricultural products of 24 headings (2-digit HS code) of agricultural products in the scenario of tariff reduction to zero when EVFTA comes into effect and other necessary parameters. The analytical result shows the rise in exporting agricultural products from Vietnam to EU when EVFTA is valid. Based on research result, we propose some policies to promote the export of agricultural products from Vietnam to EU in the future.

**Key words:** EVFTA, agricultural products, Vietnam, EU, exportation.

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## **1. Introduction**

The European Union – Vietnam Free Trade Agreement officially comes into effect from 01/8/2020, creating opportunities and special import-export advantages for Vietnamese goods, which marks an crucial step in the comprehensive cooperative partnership between Vietnam and EU. It is a success based on the efforts of the whole political system during a decade since Vietnam and EU started negotiating Free Trade Agreement (FTA). According to economic specialists, EVFTA is valid, which contributes to restructuring of imported and exported products, helps Vietnam to create a proactive position in markets and diversified supply chains, reduce risks of disruption in trade and supply chain due to the changes of commercial relationship, climate, natural and epidemiological disaster to ensure the stable development of economics. After one year of implementing the EVFTA, two-way trade between Vietnam and EU still reached more than 54 billion USD, up 12%, export turnover reached more than 38 billion USD, up 11% (General Department of Vietnam Customs, 2021). The Commission of European Communities (2018) forecasts that exports from Vietnam to the EU will increase by about 18%, equivalent to an increase of 15 billion EUR in 2035 under the impact of EVFTA.

While the export of agricultural products is considered to be the field that is eligible to enjoy the largest tariff preferences, especially Vietnamese agricultural products with comparative advantages such as vegetables, fruits, rice, coffee, pepper,... For example, coffee exported from Vietnam to the EU were previously subject to a tax of 7.5-11.5%, but after the EVFTA took effect, import tax was eliminated, which opened up great opportunities for Vietnam to increase its competitiveness and boost coffee exports to this potential market.

In a comprehensive way, the EVFTA is a basic condition for Vietnamese agricultural products to effectively take advantage of the huge "piece of cake" brought by the EVFTA. According to data from the Commission of the European Communities, from August 2020 to July 2021, one year after the EVFTA came into effect, before the impact of the covid-19 pandemic, the export turnover of agricultural products from Vietnam. South to the EU

still reached 1,993.96 million EUR. However, the above result is not commensurate with Vietnam's potential, has not fully exploited the tariff incentives from EVFTA and Vietnam's comparative advantage in agricultural products. On the other hand, the EU is one of the difficult markets with strict technical barriers in trade, especially for agricultural products.

Therefore, the analysis and assessment of the impact of the EVFTA on the export of agricultural products from Vietnam to the EU is necessary for Vietnam to make specific adjustments and plans for the immediate priority goals as well as the long-term benefits, thereby improving the effectiveness of supporting Vietnamese businesses in the coming time, boosting the export of agricultural products from Vietnam to the EU during EVFTA implementation.

## 2. Literature review

Researching the impact of FTA on member states, Viner (1950) gave two trends of main impacting of FTA that are trade creation and trade diversion. Trade creation occurs when the quantity of domestically-produced goods reduces and is replaced by importing goods from cooperative nations of FTA, the increase of consumption quantity is met by imported goods.

Trade diversion occurs when goods imported from nations that are not members of FTA reduce and are replaced by goods imported from member states of FTA due to the reduction in tax that makes the price of imported goods if lower than the others. If the positive influences from setting up larger trade market are greater than the negative ones from trade diversion, FTA will improve the welfare of the country.

When applying the theories of trade diversion and trade creation to analyze the impact of the FTA between the EU and South Africa, Johanna Assarson concluded that exports from South Africa to the EU increased by 75% and imports by 93% from 1999-2004, shows that the trade creation impact has already taken place and that South Africa has benefited from the establishment of an FTA with the EU.

Paul Baker (2015) used computable general equilibrium and computable partial equilibrium to analyse the expected impacts of EVFTA, apply a standard sustainable impact assessment framework with a forecast up to 2025. Vietnam is foreseen to grow significantly thanks to capital inflows and improvement impacts of enhancing labour productivity with an estimate to generate an additional 7-8% GDP in terms of economic growth by 2025.

Hadjinikolov et. al. (2018) used computable partial equilibrium to analyse the impact of EVFTA on exporting rice from Bulgaria to Vietnam. The result showed that the EVFTA creates opportunities of exporting rice to Vietnam of Bulgaria with the highest positive impact on products from food industry, chemical industry and garment industry. The limitation of this study was when performing the simulation, the study defaulted to the case of full liberalization despite the existence of tariffs on some products.

Nguyen Thi Huyen Trang (2016) when analysing the commitments in EVFTA for footwear proposed that the EVFTA is more attractive to most of tax lines reduced to 0% compared to GSP, creating a better momentum for footwear exports into the EU with expected growth of about 20-30%; while Belgium, Germany and Netherland are the three largest footwear import markets from Vietnam in the EU. However, the study haven't quantified particularly the impact of EVFTA to which extent yet.

Nguyen Tien Hoang et. al. (2021) used SMART model to analyse the impact of the EVFTA on exporting wood and products from wood from Vietnam to the EU. The result showed that there was a slight increase in exporting when the EVFTA is valid. The trade creation effect outweighs the trade diversion effect, accounting for about 57.49% of the total trade impact.

Similarly, when conducting the illustration of SMART model to study the impact of the EVFTA on Vietnam's main commodities to the EU, Pham Van Phuc Tan (2019) shows that the impact of the trade creation dominates the trade diversion when it accounts for 69% of total impact of the EVFTA for exporting vessels of Vietnam. While, Trinh Thuy Ngan (2020) concludes that the EVFTA will create positive impact to make the value of exporting agricultural products from Vietnam to the EU increase up to more than 37.352 million USD. Truong Thu Ha (2021) evaluated the opportunities and threats of exporting agricultural products to the EU when joining the EVFTA and suggested some methods to promote export, take advantage of the opportunities brought by the EVFTA. The limitation of the study is not to quantify specifically the impact of the EVFTA on exporting agricultural products from Vietnam to the EU.

Thus, it can be seen that the above studies have not fully and comprehensively studied the impact of the EVFTA on the export of agricultural products from Vietnam to the EU. Therefore, this is a study that contributes to filling the above gap on the impacts of the EVFTA on the export of agricultural products from Vietnam to the EU; thereby, proposing some recommendations to promote agricultural exports. products from Vietnam to the EU.

### 3. Research method

To use and analyse the collected data, we used statistical method, comparison and analyzed trade indicators and SMART model.

#### *Revealed comparative advantage index (RCA)*

Liesner (1985) based on revealed comparative advantage and indicated that the idea of evaluating a product having comparative advantage of a country through analyzing export turnover of this product.

If  $RCA > 1$ , country  $i$  have a comparative advantage in product  $j$ . If  $RCA < 1$ , country  $i$  doesn't have a comparative advantage in product  $j$ . To evaluate specifically the degree of comparative advantage, RCA is divided into 4 groups below:

**Table 1. Classification of the degree of comparative advantage based on RCA**

No.	Group	The degree of comparative advantage
1	$0 < RCA \leq 1$	No comparative advantage
2	$1 < RCA \leq 2$	Low comparative advantage
3	$2 < RCA \leq 4$	Average comparative advantage
4	$RCA \geq 4$	High comparative advantage

*Source: Hinloopen & Van Marrewijk (2001)*

Mathematical definition

$$RCA_{ij} = \frac{\frac{x_{ij}}{x_{it}}}{\frac{x_{wj}}{x_{wt}}}$$

Where:

RCA: comparative advantage index;

$x_{ij}$  : export turnover of product  $j$  of country  $i$ ;

$x_{it}$  : total export turnover of country  $i$ ;

$x_{wj}$  : export turnover of all countries in the world;

$x_{wt}$  : total export turnover of all countries in the world.

#### *Analyzing by SMART model*

SMART model (Software for Market Analysis and Restrictions on Trade) bases on computable partial equilibrium theory accompanied by a simulation tool that is part of the WITS supplied by World Bank.

There are two approaches to assessing the impact of an FTA on a country's trade, including potential impact assessment (ex-ante) and actual impact assessment (ex-post). Through background theory and empirical models, the new EVFTA will take effect on August 1, 2020, so it will be difficult to assess the actual impact of the EVFTA when there is not enough necessary data. Therefore, choosing a model to assess the potential impact of EVFTA on Vietnam's agricultural exports to the EU market is the most appropriate method.

The pros of SMART model are easily accessible and go with WITS, bring many important quantitative results about trade impact, welfare, tax takings of a industry quite detailedly and analyse at the most isolated trade data level. However, the limitation of SMART model is the result of the model limited by direct influences when there are some changes in commercial policies of a market as the model bases on computable partial equilibrium theory. Therefore, the model ignores indirect effects of trade policy changes in other markets (intersectoral effects) and feedback effects (effects due to trade policy changes in a particular market which spread to relevant markets and back to the market under consideration).

With SMART model, to evaluate the expected impact of reducing tax according to EVFTA on commercial activities of agricultural products of Vietnam with the EU. The selected tariff reduction scenario is a 100% tax reduction. Using the SMART tool, we consider and evaluate the impact of tariff elimination on the export of agricultural products from Vietnam to the EU. In this scenario, only the impacts of agricultural products will be analyzed and assessed, specifically code HS 01 to 24, 1601 and 1602 except for aquatic products (code HS 03). The data to run the model are taken from the WIST system of World Bank (World Bank, 2020).

#### 4. Research result

##### 4.1. Revealed Comparative Advantage Index (RCA)

RCA index of agricultural products industry of Vietnam from 2011 to 2020 compared to the world based on 2-digit HS displayed in table 4.6. Articles of a kind "Coffee, tea, maté and spices" (HS 09) have the greatest competitive advantage with RCA about 8 – 30.000. Articles of a kind "edible fruit and nuts; peel of citrus fruit or melons" (HS 08) have the average competitive advantage with RCA about 1.5 – 3. In fact, there are different articles of agricultural products of Vietnam which don't have comparative advantage such as "Live animals; animal products" (HS 01), "Meat and edible meat offal" (HS 02), "Dairy produce; birds' eggs; natural honey; edible products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified or included" (HS 04), "Cereals" (HS 10), "Products of the milling industry; malt; starches; inulin; wheat gluten" (HS 11), "Sausages and similar products, of meat, meat offal or blood; food preparations based on these products" (HS 1601), "Other prepared or preserved meat, meat offal or blood" (HS 1602), "Sugars and sugar confectionery" (HS 17), "Cocoa and cocoa preparations" (HS 18), "Residues and waste from the food industries; prepared animal fodder" (HS 23), "Tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes" (HS 24).

**Table 2: RCA of Vietnam's agricultural products compared to the world's from 2011 to 2020**

HS code	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>01</b>	0.193	0.128	0.090	0.141	0.119	0.116	0.100	0.131	0.141	0.161
<b>02</b>	0.023	0.016	0.018	0.016	0.026	0.021	0.020	0.020	0.036	0.022
<b>04</b>	0.000	0.000	0.003	0.010	0.004	0.003	0.007	0.004	0.003	0.004
<b>05</b>	0.489	0.311	0.278	0.294	0.362	0.339	0.352	0.601	1.081	0.288
<b>06</b>	0.141	0.102	0.081	0.074	0.062	0.059	0.065	0.075	0.085	0.079
<b>07</b>	0.317	0.222	0.193	0.186	0.153	0.150	0.137	0.108	0.124	0.119
<b>08</b>	3.023	2.063	1.389	1.835	2.129	2.325	2.620	2.434	2.292	2.094
<b>09</b>	31.788	22.939	19.694	17.772	13.984	12.918	11.901	11.473	9.632	8.123
<b>10</b>	0.364	0.251	0.349	0.223	0.173	0.146	0.083	0.103	0.199	0.255
<b>11</b>	0.262	0.175	0.095	0.105	0.156	0.143	0.159	0.194	0.231	0.180
<b>12</b>	0.216	0.134	0.107	0.095	0.078	0.101	0.111	0.136	0.139	0.119
<b>13</b>	0.040	0.025	0.013	0.019	0.006	0.033	0.204	0.305	0.416	0.175
<b>14</b>	0.238	0.150	0.306	0.486	0.569	0.718	0.801	0.404	0.412	0.512
<b>15</b>	0.029	0.020	0.021	0.018	0.010	0.015	0.052	0.073	0.110	0.047
<b>1601</b>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
<b>1602</b>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.003	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
<b>17</b>	0.097	0.065	0.065	0.161	0.065	0.053	0.055	0.057	0.054	0.034
<b>18</b>	0.064	0.049	0.039	0.040	0.030	0.039	0.033	0.031	0.029	0.026
<b>19</b>	0.841	0.567	0.392	0.426	0.509	0.461	0.433	0.462	0.493	0.514
<b>20</b>	0.251	0.174	0.192	0.232	0.238	0.280	0.258	0.235	0.303	0.330
<b>21</b>	0.528	0.361	0.499	0.616	0.473	0.324	0.370	0.380	0.358	0.423
<b>22</b>	0.033	0.023	0.010	0.015	0.017	0.018	0.024	0.029	0.034	0.033
<b>23</b>	0.139	0.086	0.073	0.091	0.095	0.053	0.054	0.055	0.064	0.039
<b>24</b>	0.087	0.061	0.027	0.020	0.015	0.003	0.007	0.004	0.003	0.004

Source: Calculation based on data collected from Eurostat

Besides, some of articles of a kind have RCA increase such as: "Lac, gums, resins and other vegetable saps and extracts" (HS 13), "Vegetable plaiting materials; vegetable products not elsewhere specified or included" (HS 14), "Animal or vegetable fats and oils and their cleavage products; prepared edible fats; animal or vegetable waxes" (HS 15), "preparations of vegetables, fruits, nuts or other parts of plants" (HS 20). Some articles of agricultural products have RCA strongly decrease such as "products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified or included" (HS 05), "Edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers" (HS 07), "Products of the milling industry; malt; starches; inulin; wheat gluten" (HS 11). This fact results from that many countries in the area have the same structure of exporting agricultural products as Vietnam such as Thailand, China.

#### **4.2 Scenerio and result of estimation model**

Within the scope of the article, we use the SMART model to assess the impact of the proposed tariff reduction scenario under the EVFTA on Vietnam's trade in agricultural products with the EU. The selected tariff reduction scenario is a 100% tax reduction. Using the SMART tool, the authors consider and evaluate the impact of tariff elimination on the export of agricultural products from Vietnam to the EU.

The tariff reduction scenario is evaluated based on model that Vietnam is an export country, tariff reduction in agricultural products exported to the EU. In this model, the result will show the changes of the value of Vietnam's agricultural exports to the EU when tariffs are cut down.

**(1) General information**

Exporting country: Vietnam

Importing country: the EU

Year of surveying tax flow: 2020

**(2) The EU's agricultural products trade impact on Vietnam**

**Table 3. The EU's agricultural products trade impact on Vietnam**

*Unit: thousand USD*

HS code	Impact on total trade	Trade creation	Trade diversion
01	0.000	0.000	0.000
02	0.408	0.173	0.235
04	0.000	0.000	0.000
05	0.000	0.000	0.000
06	0.000	0.000	0.000
07	0.000	0.000	0.000
08	0.000	0.000	0.000
09	0.000	0.000	0.000
10	0.000	0.000	0.000
11	401.834	315.533	86.301
12	0.000	0.000	0.000
13	0.000	0.000	0.000
14	0.000	0.000	0.000
15	0.000	0.000	0.000
1601	4.659	2.536	2.123
1602	2.818	1.512	1.306
17	415.957	160.912	255.045
18	309.085	153.655	155.43
19	816.972	418.908	398.064
20	15.411	3.712	11.699
21	2,344.841	909.226	1,435.615
22	295.419	85.647	209.772
23	0.000	0.000	0.000
24	12.598	10.986	1.612
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,620.002</b>	<b>2,062.800</b>	<b>2,557.202</b>

*Source: Summarized from the result of SMART-WITS model*

Table 3 explains specifically the impact of definite reduction in tariff in the EVFTA to the value of exporting agricultural products from Vietnam to the EU through the trade creation effect and the trade diversion effect. While, the EVFTA doesn't have any influences on some codes: HS 01, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 23. In the rest, the trade creation and trade diversion of the EU to Vietnam are both positive. It shows that exporting agricultural products from different countries to Vietnam is taking place in the EU. According to this, the impact on the total trade is 4,620.002 thousand USD; the trade creation: 2,062.800 thousand USD and the trade diversion: 2,557.202 thousand USD.

Figures from the model for commercial diversion. This shows that the EVFTA, when it comes into effect, will increase the ability of Vietnam's goods to be exported to the EU market. This thing for the goods of Vietnam becomes, more competitive than goods from other competitor countries that export similar goods to the EU and can replace corresponding goods in the domestic market. Therefore, when the EVFTA comes into effect, it will sharply increase Vietnam's export turnover of goods to the EU market.

*The impact of Vietnam's export turnover of agricultural products*

**Table 4. The impact of Vietnam's export turnover of agricultural products**

*Unit: thousand USD*

HS code	Export before changes	Export after changes	Value change	% change
01	11,814.845	11,814.845	0.000	0.000
02	3,516.669	3,517.077	0.408	0.012
04	4,166.131	4,166.131	0.000	0.000
05	8,592.260	8,592.260	0.000	0.000
06	7,442.049	7,442.049	0.000	0.000
07	16,541.585	16,541.585	0.000	0.000
08	976,420.378	976,420.378	0.000	0.000
09	1,312,494.562	1,312,494.562	0.000	0.000
10	310.783	310.783	0.000	0.000
11	5,928.422	6,330.256	401.834	6.778
12	7,556.971	7,556.971	0.000	0.000
13	946.832	946.832	0.000	0.000
14	1,374.631	1,374.631	0.000	0.000
15	11,748.285	11,748.285	0.000	0.000
1601	14.759	19.418	4.659	31.567
1602	12.739	15.557	2.818	22.121
17	2,984.685	3,400.642	415.957	13.936
18	1,901.127	2,210.212	309.085	16.258
19	121,230.767	122,047.739	816.972	0.674
20	85,093.149	85,108.560	15.411	0.018
21	94,943.454	97,288.295	2,344.841	2.470
22	6,715.184	7,010.603	295.419	4.399
23	9,172.577	9,172.577	0.000	0.000
24	5.661	18.259	12.598	222.540
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,690,928.505</b>	<b>2,695,548.507</b>	<b>4,620.002</b>	<b>0.172</b>

*Source: Summarized from the result of SMART-WITS model*

Table 4 shows the change in export turnover of Vietnam's agricultural products to the EU. It can be seen that the tariff reduction in the EVFTA framework does not bring export benefits for some products; exports of product groups HS 01, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 23 have no change before and after tax reduction. In contrast, the remaining groups of students had positive changes.

## 5. Conclusion and proposals

### 5.1. Conclusion

The result of the study shows that the EVFTA comes into effect, which brings a lot of economic benefits to Vietnam as it helps to increase export overturn of agricultural products from Vietnam to the EU. Based on SMART model, the effect of the EVFTA helps to increase 4,620,002 USD and trade diversion effect dominates trade creation effect when it accounts for 55.35% of total trade effect. This shows the increase in export of agricultural products from Vietnam to the EU while tariff reduces to 0%, almost thanks to the low price of agricultural products of Vietnam compared to goods produced from different countries exporting into the EU. Besides, the trade creation effect accounts for a relatively high proportion, about 44.65% of the total trade impact, showing that under the impact of the EVFTA, Vietnamese agricultural products can compete with and even replace other agricultural products. similar products in the domestic market.

However, the advantage of tariff reduction due to the EVFTA should be considered carefully as competitors are constantly promoting the process of starting, negotiating and signing an FTA with the EU to reduce tariff pressure on their goods exported to the EU.

### 5.2. Proposals

#### *For the government*

The government needs to strengthen the dissemination of information about the EVFTA so that the business community and employees better understand and have knowledge about the commitments made in the EVFTA, thereby, continue to renew thinking and awareness of the EVFTA. At the same time, the government needs to analyze and evaluate the potential impacts of the EVFTA to find out which products are capable of taking advantage of opportunities and those that are subject to great challenges from the EVFTA. On that basis, do a thorough analysis to determine the costs and benefits of opening the market for these items and associated solutions.

For agricultural products, it is necessary to improve the competitiveness of exported agricultural products by ensuring food safety and hygiene, origin, and technological innovation to increase product quality and diversify products. products, attracting more partner countries in the EU. Policies to improve the competitiveness of enterprises need to be focused and supported appropriately, timely and quickly.

#### *For the enterprises*

The enterprises need to show a more proactive spirit in learning about the EVFTA as only when understanding it, we can put it into practice.

Enterprises themselves need to strengthen cooperation, learn from each other, change management and business thinking, link to form production and business chains to be able to gather enough resources to face competitive pressure.

Businesses also need to pay close attention to commitments on sustainable development such as principles and standards on labor and environmental protection because these are issues that the EU is particularly interested in. On the basis of the tasks assigned by the Government in the Government's implementation plan of the EVFTA, ministries, ministerial-level agencies, provinces and cities across the country will develop specific implementation plans of agencies and localities.

#### *For trade associations*

The trade associations need to act as a bridge between the agency that promulgates regulations and legal documents related to the EVFTA, the EVFTA implementing agency at the ministerial, sectoral and enterprise levels. As a bridge, industry associations need to update regulations and legal documents as quickly as possible to businesses, guide implementation, and provide advice and support to answer difficulties for businesses.

Besides, they need to support the access to the markets for businesses. The association needs to review and provide information on the market through the network of trade associations of different countries and Vietnamese embassies in other countries. The process of reviewing and providing information will assist businesses in making appropriate decisions, and at the same time, orient domestic enterprises to establish

commercial relationships in line with management objectives, orientations and guidelines. agricultural products for export.

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**Corresponding Author:** Nguyen Hai Toan, Hanoi University of Natural Resources and Environment, Vietnam.

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