Concept Note – AMIS Policy Database

The main objective of the AMIS Policy Database is to monitor recent policy developments which are likely to impact on the prices, trade and production of selected commodities. To achieve this objective, the database gathers information on trade measures and domestic measures for the four AMIS crops (wheat, maize, rice, and soybeans) as well as biofuels in the 28 AMIS countries[1].

The novelty of the AMIS Policy Database is twofold. First, it is the only database that combines trade and domestic policy information for a large group of countries. Second, its design allows for comparisons across commodities, across policies and across the AMIS countries for selected periods of time. This was accomplished through a rigorous harmonization process where different datasets were integrated and a new comprehensive database[2] structure was designed. As a result, the AMIS Policy Database provides a standardised, easily accessible source of information for policy makers and analysts.

Sources

The different policy datasets originate from two international organizations: OECD and WTO. The table below indicates the source for each dataset as well as the year from which information has been collected consistently. In certain countries or for certain policies, information is also available for prior years.

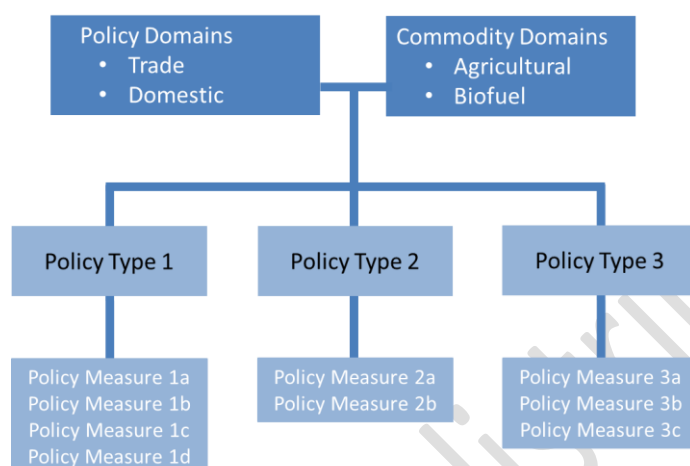| Policy dataset	Source	Consistent data collection starting from:
Biofuels	OECD	2011
Export Restrictions	OECD	2007
Export Subsidies	WTO	1995
Import tariffs	WTO	2010
Tariff quotas	WTO	1995
In-quota tariffs	WTO	1995
Producer and consumer support estimates	OECD	1986

The datasets on biofuel policies and export restrictions have been constructed by gathering information from official legal documents, government websites and other reliable sources. The WTO datasets are based on WTO Members' annual notifications. The data on producer and consumer support originate from OECD's Producer and Consumer Support Estimates database.

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[1] The 28 AMIS countries are the G20 countries (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union), plus Spain and seven major producing, consuming and exporting countries of commodities covered by AMIS. These seven countries are: Egypt, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Philippines, Thailand, Ukraine and Viet Nam.

[2] The word 'dataset' is used to refer to the original datasets while the word 'database' denotes the integrated version of the datasets.

Classification of policies

The classification of policies follows a hierarchical structure (see diagram below). At a first level, the policy domain and the commodity domain are identified. The policy domain is either trade or domestic, while the commodity domain is either agricultural or biofuel. Then, for each combination of a specific policy domain with a specific commodity domain (e.g. trade and biofuel), there is a set of policy types. Finally, each policy type consists of a set of policy measures.

Common policy types and policy measures have been used where possible between the agricultural and biofuel domains. The online application provides a comprehensive diagram with all the policy types and policy measures for each combination of policy and commodity domains.

Commodity lists

Separate policy datasets do not allow for easy comparisons because they use different commodity definitions. The AMIS Policy Database solves this issue by creating a consistent commodity list based on WTO's classification of commodities. In particular, wherever this was possible HS codes were added or updated in the database and WTO descriptions for commodities were used. In addition, commodity descriptions were harmonized across countries and across policies. To facilitate the readability of commodity descriptions in the online application, a short description was created for each record that relates to an AMIS commodity or biofuel. The result of this process is the creation of a *Commodity List*, which can be downloaded from the online application.

Certain policy measures, such as export subsidies and quotas, may apply to groups of commodities, which are called 'shared groups' in the database. The composition of these shared groups can be found in the *Shared Group list*, featured in the online application. This list gives the name of the shared group as well as the description, HS code and HS version of the commodities that make up the shared group. Some groups of commodities were created before 2005 and as a result contain older versions of the commodity descriptions and HS codes. Where possible, the corresponding updated HS codes, HS versions and HS descriptions are listed next to the original HS codes, HS versions and HS descriptions in the *Shared Group list*.

Commodity classes

Policy measures can be targeted to very specific varieties. An important outcome of the harmonization process is that it is possible to combine policy information for broad commodity classes and hence obtain a more general overview. This was achieved by assigning each record (or line of information) to a specific commodity class. The commodity classes consist of either one of the AMIS commodities (single commodity class) or a combination of AMIS commodities (mixed commodity class). The table below lists the commodity classes that are currently used in the database. The list is not exhaustive as more combinations may be added in the future.

Single Commodity Classes	
	Wheat
	Rice
	Maize
	Soybeans
	Ethanol
	Biodiesel
	Biofuel (undefined)[3]

Mixed Commodity Classes	
	Wheat + Maize
	Wheat + Rice
	Maize + Rice
	Maize + Soybeans
	Wheat + Maize + Rice

Mixed commodity classes can occur in two cases. First, when a policy measure applies to a group of commodities or shared group, as is the case for export subsidies and quotas. These shared groups can consist of commodities that all belong to the same commodity class (e.g. the shared group is composed of four varieties of maize), or of commodities that belong to different commodity classes (e.g. the shared group is composed of two varieties of wheat and three varieties of maize). In the latter case, the policy measure will be assigned to a mixed commodity class. Mixed commodity classes can also occur when the commodity itself is a combination of different commodity classes (e.g. a semi-processed product that contains both wheat and maize).

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[3] This category is used when the legal document does not specify whether the policy applies to ethanol or biodiesel

Online application

The complete AMIS Policy Database can be downloaded from the online application[4]. The online application is not only a depository of the database, but also an analytical tool which provides both a concise and an in-depth overview of the database. This is accomplished through the development of several activities in the application:

- A *Visualization* tool, which provides a set of interactive graphs that give a snapshot of the contents and potential of the AMIS Policy Database.
- A *Query and Download* tool, which allows the user to select, view and download subsets of the AMIS Policy Database.
- An *Analysis* tool, which compares policy information with market information.
- A *Statistical Notes* page with explanatory documents, diagrams and links with background information on the organization and contents of the database.
- A *Restricted Access* segment which enables AMIS members and the Secretariat to exchange information on policy developments of relevance to AMIS.