

# Complex Economic Problems and One Health: How Corn Kills Americans

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**Protectionism** is an economic doctrine of favoring domestic producers through government intervention. **Subsidies** for a select group (e.g. farmers of certain American crops) come at the expense of higher prices, for everyone, take away tax resources from programs that could directly alleviate health issues, and reinforce health inequities.

- Subsidies for farmers are either financed by higher taxes (taking money from people), import **tariffs** (directly raising prices), or deficit spending, which is **inflationary** (raising prices indirectly). These disproportionately affect the most vulnerable groups. The economic term for this is *regressive*: because poorer people have less money to spend, every dollar increase in food prices hits them hardest
- Rather than maximizing the efficient use of scarce resources, subsidies arbitrarily drain resources towards producing an unnecessary surplus of some goods, at the expense of others

While some indirect subsidies, such as school lunch programs, have health benefits, protectionism, including direct subsidies and tariffs, mostly serve the interests of major landholders and big business. Further, the crops we subsidize are not particularly tied to our nutritional needs, and distort the ingredients in our foods. These effects are not only local to the US, but echo to the global food supply. Because US farm companies get government money, they can sell for less, forcing farmers in countries like Brazil, or Ethiopia into bankruptcy

## Mechanisms & impact

Generally leads to higher food prices for consumers. This can reduce access to nutritious foods, particularly for low-income populations, exacerbating issues of food insecurity and malnutrition.



Negatively impacts animal health through the homogenization of animal feed, leading to dietary-related illnesses, the facilitation of factory farming, and the subsequent rise in antibiotic misuse and ecological imbalance.

Monoculture can have profound negative impacts on the environment, contributing to: soil degradation, reduce biodiversity, water waste and pollution.



Distorts market prices and trade dynamics, leading to surplus production of certain crops like corn and soybeans, which in turn affects the diversity and accessibility of food on a national and global scale.

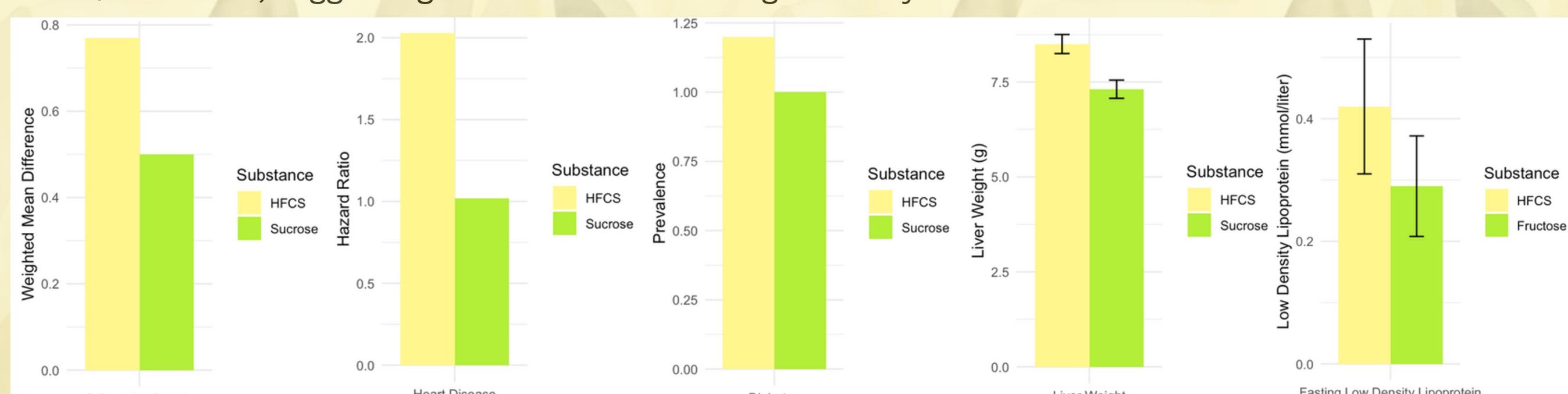


Largely influences global food security.  
**Short-Term:** Protects domestic agriculture, but increases food prices  
**Long-Term:** Exacerbates global health disparities and nutritional deficiencies.



## Case Study - Impact of high fructose corn syrup on our health

High fructose corn syrup (HFCS) consumption potentially threatens our well-being. It is associated with multiple adverse health indicators/outcomes, suggesting that HFCS could be significantly more detrimental to health than traditional sugars.



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## Solutions

In the context of the United States in particular, combating the harms of protectionism necessitates a **multidimensional approach** that recognizes how intricate economic policies and their profound effects are.

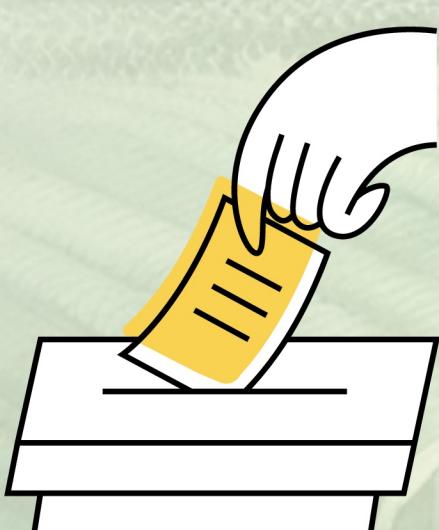
### Advocacy

The fact that legislative and executive actions produce protectionist policies emphasizes the fact that human conduct has the power to change or reverse them. Active participation in public policy advocacy, lobbying, and conversation are direct means of effecting change.

Proactive public pressure and educated discourse can force the reevaluation of protectionist policies that might be more harmful to the economy than beneficial. Hence, we know individual advocacy efforts are elemental to this effort.



### Voter and Civic Engagement



Farmers are subsidized because they vote at higher rates than urban young people. Hence, a more fair representation of interests in policy-making is made possible by targeted measures to raise political and voter engagement among less likely-to-vote populations. Young and marginalized voters, for example, may bear the brunt of protectionist policies through increased consumer costs.

### Informed Consumption

Customers wield power by virtue of their purchasing choices. They indirectly affect economic policy by supporting businesses that favor free trade or by selecting goods that are not significantly impacted by protectionist laws. Furthermore, a more thorough comprehension of economic concepts might help to clarify the effects of trade and protectionism. The implementation of educational efforts can equip individuals with the necessary skills to assess the benefits and downsides of protectionist policies.



### Examples



Widespread public opposition to a trade deal was mobilized by **anti-TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership)** campaigns in the US and other nations, citing worries about sovereignty and the agreement's potential effects on regional industries and labor forces. A number of groups worked together to have the U.S. pull out of the TPP discussions in 2017.



The **Fair Trade movement** offers proof of how consumer decisions may affect trade laws and regulations. Educated and informed customers may influence the supply chain and demand by opting to buy fair trade certified items, which promotes more ethical business practices.