



International Trade and Climate Action in Lesotho: An Appraisal of the Regulatory Framework

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1. Introduction

The nexus between trade and Environment has become increasingly important in recent times across the globe since the realization of the impact trade activities on the environment.¹ As a member of the global community, Lesotho is required to consider the environment during trade dialogues and policy formulation to foster sustainable and responsible trade practices.²

2. Background

From time immemorial, trade was characterised by several key development trends that primarily focused on economic development.³ The primary focus of countries was to maximize production and trade.⁴ There was little or no focus on environmental issues. For example, development of policies spoke to how to liberalize trade, reduce tariffs, encourage exports to name a few. Emission of greenhouse gases took place on a large scale with little or no consideration to waste management. Over the years, there was no care about the damage caused by products that were used in manufacturing or agriculture – for example plastics in manufacturing and pesticides, or coal for production energy etc. The aim was economic development and not sustainable development.

The end result of prioritizing economic development was negative impacts of this myopic view about production and trade to the exclusion of sustainability. We saw an increase in global warming, drought, floods and climate change. These negative consequences ended up affecting production and trade. So, people began to see the value of protecting the environment and adding environmental concerns into national laws and regional and international agreements. There is now a looming collision between trade and climate change that can no longer be ignored.

Realisation of the detrimental impacts of climate change on the economy led the global community including Lesotho, to embark on discussions which aim to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations.

¹ <https://www.trapca.org//tradeandenviromentgrowingnexus> accessed 14th October 2024.

² Ibid

³ Antimiani, Constantini V., Kuik O (2016) Mitigation of adverse effects on competitiveness and leakages of unilateral EU climate policy.

⁴ Ibid



The creation of the National Environment policy, the National Climate Change Policy were milestones taken to address climate change through policy formation in Lesotho.

3. Current Landscape

Lesotho has developed various policy frameworks such the National Climate Change Policy, and National Strategic Development Plan II 2023/24-2027/28 that highlight the need to consider the nexus between environment and trade. Lesotho has also signed and ratified various international instruments that encourage the nexus between environment and trade, for instance Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA), Protocol on Environmental Management for Sustainable Development 2014, Southern African Customs Union (SACU) Agreement 2002, SADC Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, 2015. However, there is a need to implement the policies. Financial and technical resources remain a major constraint to implement policies.

4. Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations aim to encourage sustainable trade and to protect and conserve the environment with a view to achieving sustainable development for Lesotho.

1. Trade and climate change strategies:
Develop strategies to stringently control importation or generation of banned toxic, hazardous radioactive substances in Lesotho.
2. Invest in green and efficient technologies:
Invest in clean energy generation initiatives particularly in trade related sectors.
3. Legal Frameworks:
Harmonize current legal frameworks by developing a consolidated framework that cuts across different sectors to encourage environmentally friendly and socio- economic sustainability.
Participation in regional and international frameworks that Lesotho has ratified.
4. Technical assistance:
Seek financial aid to finance mitigation and adaptation strategies.