

# Research on the Problems of Environmental Trade Barriers in International Trade and Countermeasures

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**Abstract:** With the wave of globalization is deepening, international trade is becoming more and more prosperous, and it has become a main driving force for the economic development of various countries. However, with the improvement of environmental protection awareness, environmental trade barriers have also become a difficult problem in international trade. These barriers are in the name of protecting the environment, but in fact they take trade liberalization and fairness as obstacles, bringing many barriers to international trade. Therefore, this study analyzes the problems of environmental trade barriers in international trade, with an aim to propose corresponding countermeasures and promote the healthy development of international trade.

**Keywords:** International trade; Environmental trade barrier problems; Countermeasure research

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## 1. Introduction

With the deepening of the globalized economy, the scale of international trade is continuously expanding, and the economic connections among countries are becoming closer and closer. However, environmental issues have gradually become a concern of the whole world. In order to protect the ecological environment of their own countries and ensure public health, many countries have issued a series of environment-related trade policies, and environmental trade barriers have emerged accordingly. These barriers use seemingly reasonable environmental protection reasons to set a series of obstacles for imported products, bringing many troubles to the normal development of international trade and seriously hindering the development of global trade liberalization. In this case, to make a comprehensive analysis of the environmental trade barriers in international trade and find effective countermeasures has become an important issue that needs to be solved urgently <sup>[1]</sup>.

## **2. Main forms of environmental trade barriers in international trade**

### **2.1. Environmental technical standards and regulations**

Environmental technical standards and regulations are the main form of environmental trade barriers. They refer to a series of strict environmental technical standards, regulations and conformity assessment procedures formulated by the importing country in order to achieve the purpose of environmental protection, thus making various restrictive provisions on imported goods. These standards and regulations usually involve many aspects such as product production, processing, packaging, transportation, use and waste disposal, and require that imported goods must meet the corresponding environmental protection standards, otherwise they cannot enter the market. As environmental technical standards and regulations vary among countries, and some standards are highly technical and concealed, they can easily become tools of trade protectionism and bring unfair trade barriers to enterprises of exporting countries.

### **2.2. Green certification and labeling system**

Green certification and labeling system refer to the specific marks or permits issued by the government of the importing country or relevant institutions according to certain environmental standards, so as to prove that the products meet certain environmental protection requirements. These systems stipulate that products from exporting countries must obtain corresponding green certification or labels before they can enter the market of the importing country. Green certification and labeling system is not only the certification of the product production process, but also the certification of product performance, recycling treatment after use and other aspects. As there are differences in green certification, labeling standards and procedures among countries, this increases the certification cost and time cost for enterprises of exporting countries, thus becoming a kind of hidden trade barrier<sup>[2]</sup>.

### **2.3. Green packaging and recycling system**

Green packaging and recycling system refer to the regulations made by the importing country on the packaging materials, packaging methods and recycling treatment of packaging waste of imported goods. It helps reduce the pollution caused by packaging waste to the environment and is beneficial to the recycling and utilization of resources. However, in practical operation, green packaging and recycling system are often used as a means for the importing country to restrict imported goods. The importing country may increase the packaging cost and recycling difficulty for enterprises of exporting countries by formulating strict standards for packaging materials, requirements for packaging methods and responsibilities for recycling treatment, thus setting trade barriers for imported goods.

### **2.4. Green subsidy restrictions**

Green subsidy restrictions refer to measures taken by the importing country to limit the environmental protection subsidies that enterprises in exporting countries may receive from their governments. The importing country generally believes that the environmental subsidies obtained by exporting enterprises give them an unfair competitive advantage in international trade, and therefore formulates corresponding rules to limit or prohibit the use of these subsidies. These restrictions may disrupt the cost structure and market competitiveness of exporting enterprises, and may also cause disputes and frictions in international trade. As the standards and identification procedures of green subsidy restrictions are relatively complicated, enterprises in exporting countries need to pay attention to policy changes in importing countries, strengthen compliance management,

and prevent being affected by trade barriers due to subsidy issues.

### **3. Problems of environmental trade barriers in international trade**

#### **3.1. Restrictions and discrimination against imported goods**

Environmental trade barriers refer to the practice of setting higher environmental protection standards for imported goods than for domestic goods, thus restricting foreign products from entering the market. This not only violates the principle of fairness in international trade, but also causes serious obstacles to exports from developing countries. Owing to limitations in technology level and economic strength, developing countries often find it difficult to meet the strict environmental standards set by developed countries, and therefore remain in a disadvantaged position in international trade. Environmental trade barriers may also lead to discriminatory policies against products from certain countries or regions, thereby increasing the inequality in international trade <sup>[3]</sup>.

#### **3.2. Increasing the cost burden of export enterprises**

The implementation of environmental trade barriers usually requires export enterprises to carry out a series of environmental improvements and certifications for their products in order to meet the environmental standards of the importing country. These improvement and certification processes not only consume a large amount of manpower, materials and financial resources, but also involve a series of expenses such as technology introduction and equipment upgrading. For export enterprises in developing countries, these cost burdens are even heavier, which may weaken their competitiveness in the international market and may also force some enterprises to withdraw from the market because they cannot bear the costs.

#### **3.3. Triggering international trade disputes and conflicts**

The wide implementation of environmental trade barriers may lead to international trade disputes and conflicts. As there are differences in environmental standards and certification procedures among countries, exporting countries may consider the environmental trade barrier measures of importing countries to be unfair trade restrictions, which may result in trade frictions. These disputes and conflicts will not only affect the trade relations between the countries concerned, but also impact the global trade order, thereby restricting the development of international trade.

#### **3.4. Hindering the stable operation of global industrial chains and supply chains**

The existence and continuous upgrading of environmental trade barriers pose a serious threat to the stable operation of global industrial chains and supply chains. Under the background of globalization, the economies of various countries influence each other, and industrial chains and supply chains extend across national borders to form a complex network. Environmental trade barriers may cause an important link to be blocked, thus preventing the whole industrial chain and supply chain from operating smoothly. When an importing country formulates strict environmental standards, enterprises in exporting countries have to change their production processes, replace raw materials or carry out additional environmental treatment. These changes will increase production costs, prolong production time, and may even lead to disruptions in the supply chain. In addition, environmental trade barriers may also lead to trade diversion effects, making the originally efficient global allocation of resources become inefficient, thereby reducing the stability of global industrial chains and supply chains.

## **4. Countermeasure research on environmental trade barriers in international trade**

### **4.1. Strengthening international cooperation and communication to promote the coordination and unification of environmental trade barriers**

Countries should actively participate in international environmental cooperation and jointly formulate and implement unified environmental technical standards and regulations, so as to reduce trade frictions caused by differences in standards. At the same time, countries should strengthen communication and cooperation in green certification and labeling systems and establish an international mutual recognition mechanism to reduce the certification cost and time for export enterprises. Through signing multilateral or bilateral agreements, the standards, procedures and scope of mutual recognition of green certification and labels can be clarified, so that products meeting the certification requirements of one country can enter the markets of other countries. In addition, countries should strengthen exchanges and cooperation in green packaging and recycling systems, and jointly explore packaging and recycling models that are beneficial to both environmental protection and trade facilitation. By sharing best practices and carrying out joint research, the international standardization of green packaging and recycling systems can be promoted, thereby reducing the additional burden brought to export enterprises due to institutional differences<sup>[4]</sup>.

### **4.2. Improving the environmental technology level and response capacity of export enterprises**

Export enterprises should increase investment in the research and innovation of environmental protection technologies and improve the environmental performance and quality of their products, so as to meet the increasingly strict environmental standards of importing countries. Enterprises should also study international trade rules and environmental trade barriers, understand the environmental regulations and certification requirements of target markets, and formulate corresponding response measures. Enterprises can establish specialized environmental compliance departments to track the changes in international environmental regulations and make corresponding adjustments to production processes and product design, so as to ensure that their products meet the environmental standards of importing countries. In addition, enterprises can cooperate with enterprises in importing countries to develop environmental technologies and products, thereby reducing the risks caused by environmental trade barriers.

### **4.3. Strengthening environmental publicity and education to improve the environmental awareness of all employees in export enterprises**

Export enterprises should fully recognize the role of environmental protection in international trade and carry out environmental publicity and education for all employees through internal training, external lectures and publicity materials. By popularizing environmental protection knowledge, employees can understand the impact of environmental trade barriers on enterprises in international trade. Enterprises should strengthen environmental awareness, encourage employees to consciously comply with environmental regulations in daily work and actively adopt environmental protection measures. At the same time, enterprises should improve environmental skills through training and practice, enabling employees to master environmental technologies and methods, thereby improving the overall environmental level of the enterprise. Through these measures, an atmosphere in which everyone cares about environmental protection can be created, laying a good foundation for the sustainable development of enterprises.

#### **4.4. Improving the environmental legal and regulatory system to provide legal protection for export enterprises in dealing with environmental trade barriers**

Governments should accelerate the formulation and improvement of environmental laws and regulations related to international trade, clarify the environmental responsibilities and obligations of export enterprises, and provide legal support and guidance. These laws should be aligned with international environmental standards, so that export enterprises have legal rules to follow when facing environmental trade barriers. Governments should also improve the environmental legal consulting service system and provide professional legal consultation and assistance for export enterprises, helping enterprises deal with the environmental regulations and certification requirements of importing countries, thereby reducing legal risks caused by environmental laws and regulations. Improving the environmental legal and regulatory system can provide a fair and transparent international trade environment for export enterprises and promote their sustainable development.

#### **4.5. Giving full play to the role of industry associations and intermediary institutions to build a support system for responding to environmental trade barriers**

Industry associations are self-regulatory organizations of the industry and should organize enterprises to participate in training and exchange activities on dealing with environmental trade barriers, share successful experience and cases, and improve the response capacity of the whole industry. At the same time, industry associations can represent the industry in communication and consultation with the governments and industry associations of importing countries, reflect the demands of enterprises, and strive for reasonable trade conditions. Intermediary institutions, such as consulting companies and testing institutions, can provide professional services for enterprises facing environmental trade barriers, including the analysis of environmental regulations, certification requirements and market trends in the target markets of enterprises, thus providing reference for enterprises to formulate corresponding response measures.

#### **4.6. Promoting the construction of a green belt and road to deepen international cooperation and solutions for environmental trade barriers**

The belt and road Initiative provides a new platform for international trade cooperation. By strengthening environmental cooperation with countries along the route, countries can jointly respond to the challenges caused by environmental trade barriers. Specifically, a green belt and road cooperation mechanism can be established to strengthen the mutual recognition and coordination of environmental standards among countries along the route in the fields of environmental protection technology, standards and certification. In addition, enterprises should be encouraged to participate in the green belt and road, promote the development of environmental protection technologies and products through investment and cooperation in countries along the route, improve the local environmental conditions, and reduce the impact of environmental trade barriers. It is also possible to strengthen cooperation with international organizations and financial institutions to jointly provide support in funding, technology and other aspects for green belt and road projects, so as to promote the coordinated development of international trade and environmental protection.

### **5. Conclusion**

The problem of environmental trade barriers is a complex issue in the field of international trade and needs to be analyzed and solved from many aspects. Through in-depth research on this problem, this study provides

certain theoretical basis and practical suggestions for the fair and sustainable development of international trade, and hopes to make some contribution to the development of international trade.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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