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حمایت داخلی در بخش کشاورزی کشورهای بریکس از منظر حقوق سازمان تجارت جهانی

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چکیده

کشورهای بریکس در راستای آزادسازی تجارت محصولات کشاورزی، درصدد اجرای تعهدات خود مبنی‌بر کاهش حجم کلی حمایت‌های داخلی اخلال‌گر در تجارت (OTDS: Overall Trade-Distorting Domestic Support) اعطاشده به تولیدکنندگان بخش کشاورزی و نیز کاهش یا حذف کامل موانع دسترسی به بازارهای داخلی هستند. بااین‌حال، برخی کشورها همچنان با بهره‌گیری از سازوکارها و ترتیبات مجاز در چارچوب حقوق سازمان تجارت جهانی (WTO: World Trade Organization)، تدابیری اعمال می‌کنند که توازن امنیت غذایی را، هم در کشورهای بریکس و هم در خارج از این گروه، برهم‌می‌زند. هدف این پژوهش، بررسی ویژگی‌های سیاست‌های حمایت داخلی در کشورهای «بریکس قدیم» (برزیل، فدراسیون روسیه، هند، چین و آفریقای جنوبی) در بخش کشاورزی و در چارچوب مقررات حقوقی سازمان تجارت جهانی است. بدین منظور، انگیزه‌های اصلی اجرای سیاست‌های حمایت داخلی با تمرکز بر تجربهٔ کشورهای بریکس تحلیل شده است. همچنین، مهم‌ترین قواعد حقوق سازمان تجارت جهانی در حمایت‌های داخلی تبیین شده است تا میزان انطباق کشورهای بریکس با محدودیت‌ها و تعهدات مقرر ارزیابی شود. افزون بر این، روندهای حاکم بر سیاست‌های حمایت داخلی در کشورهای بریکس بر پایهٔ میزان حمایت‌های داخلی از نظر ارزش پولی و نیز انواع برنامه‌های حمایتی دولتی اجراشده در این کشورها بررسی شده است. یافته‌های پژوهش، جایگاه کشورهای بریکس را به‌عنوان بزرگ‌ترین صادرکنندگان برخی محصولات کشاورزی و نیز ظرفیت این گروه را برای ایفای نقش به‌عنوان ائتلافی مؤثر در مذاکرات کشاورزی سازمان تجارت جهانی آشکار می‌سازد. همچنین، با استفاده از داده‌های مربوط به سطح OTDS و بسته‌های مجاز اقدامات حمایتی، تصویری مقایسه‌ای از سیاست‌های حمایت داخلی در کشورهای بریکس ارائه می‌شود.

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Domestic support in the BRICS agricultural sector through the prism of the WTO law

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Abstract

BRICS countries are striving to liberalize trade in agricultural products, fulfilling their obligations to reduce the volume of overall trade-distorting domestic support (OTDS) measures provided to agricultural producers, lowering or completely zeroing barriers to access to the domestic market. However, there are countries that still apply certain measures that lead to an imbalance in the food security situation in the BRICS and outside the grouping, nevertheless, using the mechanisms and schemes allowed by the WTO (World Trade Organization) law. The goal of this study is to observe the specifics of domestic support policies in "old" BRICS countries (Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa) being the subject to the WTO law regulations in agricultural sector. Therefore, key motives of domestic support policy implementation are overviewed, given the specific example of the BRICS. Authors provided the main rules of the WTO law on domestic support measures in order to identify the compliance of BRICS countries with the limits and commitments set and traced out the tendencies in the BRICS domestic support policies, based on the amounts of domestic support in monetary terms and types of state programs implemented by these countries. The research objectives fulfilled are unveiling the significance of BRICS as the biggest exporters of particular agricultural products and a potential alliance within the WTO negotiations on agriculture, as well as building a comparative image of domestic support policies in the BRICS countries through the data on OTDS level and allowed packages of measures.

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1. Introduction

BRICS are represented by several major agricultural exporters which create the basis for coordination of a common policy in the field of food supply to world markets, especially under the WTO (World Trade Organization) umbrella (Angulo & Tipailov, 2023). According to the IMF report "Geoeconomic Fragmentation and Commodity Markets", BRICS countries constitute a substantial proportion of global production for several key agricultural commodities (Alvarez et al., 2023). Specifically, Brazil contributes 34% of the world's soybeans, 30% of coffee, 16% of sugar, 12% of tobacco, and 9% of maize. The Russian Federation accounts for 27% of sunflower seed production and 10% of wheat. India produces 26% of rice, 19% of sugar, 15% of wheat, and 12% of tobacco globally. China is responsible for 41% of tobacco, 30% of rice, 23% of maize, and 17% of wheat output worldwide.

As proposed by the Action Plan 2021–2024 for Agricultural Cooperation of BRICS Countries, the group considers trade facilitation, trade policy exchange and strengthening dialogues for agricultural development as key pillars for enhancement of members` partnership (BRICS, 2021). Kazan Declaration issued in October 2024 invokes the idea of creating an "unimpeded trade in agriculture" by minimization of disruptions and promotion of a rules-based approach, "with the view to ensure a continuous flow of food and essential inputs for agricultural production which should be exempted from undue restrictive economic measures, inconsistent with WTO rules, including those affecting producers and exporters of agricultural products as well as business services with regard to international shipments" (Rusian BRICS, 2024).

The Kazan Summit on October 22nd-24th, 2024 also presented a strategically significant initiative aimed at integrating BRICS member states alongside its extended "plus" network into multifaceted frameworks of collaboration (BRICS, 2024). Earlier, on July 26th 2024 during the assembly of BRICS Economy and Foreign Trade Ministers held in Moscow, consensus was reached to harmonize BRICS policies within WTO framework. A central objective underlying this decision is the BRICS coalition's commitment to mitigate escalating protectionist measures and facilitating an augmented role for developing economies in WTO governance and decision-making process.

At the BRICS Summit on July 6th, 2025 in Rio de Janeiro, a special role was assigned to the elaboration of strategic initiatives aimed at ensuring the availability, accessibility, stability and acceptability of food prices, which makes it possible to strengthen the tools for responding to supply disruptions, both national and collaborative: for example, the creation of the BRICS Grain Exchange with its subsequent expansion into other agricultural commodities and the formation of national food reserves (BRICS Brazil, 2025). In the Chair's Statement and Outcome Document at BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting held on May 14–15th, 2026 in New-Delhi, some of the factors that mostly

determine the global food security and nutrition system today were highlighted (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2026).

Alongside with it, the vector of strengthening cooperation within the framework of the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty was also mentioned. Moreover, it is particularly important to support all the stakeholders in ensuring food security, paying special attention to the small-scale family farmers, local rural communities, and so on. These discussions have been organized within the framework of the WTO Dialogue on Sustainable Agriculture, originally launched by Brazil and later advanced by members including Switzerland and China, alongside additional initiatives promoting the WTO's involvement in addressing sustainability issues in the agricultural sector (IISD, 2026a).

The problem of the paper is a divergence in BRICS countries' trade policy instruments of domestic support in the field of agriculture. BRICS exhibit heterogeneous approaches toward domestic support in the agricultural sector, therefore, being a part of different working groups. Specifically, Brazil maintains a defensive position due to its role as a prominent agricultural exporter with vested interests encompassing nearly all facets of the Doha Round negotiations. In contrast, China, despite its status as a substantial agricultural producer, faces relatively low sectoral productivity and consequently depends on extensive state intervention and subsidies. India actively implements subsidy schemes and enforces minimum support prices to protect its indigenous farming community. South Africa's policy trajectory focuses on expanding market growth by progressively reducing agricultural government subsidies, a shift from its earlier practice of providing export incentives. Meanwhile, Russia deploys a wide array of governmental initiatives, including import substitution programs, to bolster its domestic agricultural manufacturers.

Hypothetically, the trade policy of BRICS countries in agriculture is aimed at ensuring the competitiveness of local producers, providing domestic support in acceptable amounts, as well as trade liberalization through an ambition of non-application of overall trade-distorting support (OTDS) measures which are prohibited by the WTO law, especially the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA). The study consists of comparing the approaches of BRICS countries to the implementation of trade policy in agriculture, as well as highlighting the most frequently used domestic support measures. The practical significance of the research lies in the formation of a comparative image of trade policy in agriculture of the BRICS by analyzing key measures of domestic support policies.

2. Literature review

Academic literature pays special attention to the necessity and complexity of domestic support in agricultural sector. Many countries, diverse in terms of levels of their economic development and maturity

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of their internal markets, tend to use measures with adverse effects on international trade in goods and services, even if application of such instruments is regulated by the WTO law. This fact is emphasized by Khanunov and Sapozhnikova (2020), and further analyzed by Rae and Strutt (2003), and Brink (2015) on the basis of the views prevalent in the field of agriculture, including domestic support. Current negotiations on agricultural issues within WTO were incorporated in the Doha Development Agenda in 2001 and go around two basic questions: whether and how to classify measures of domestic support, as well as what is the scope of support reduction (Rae & Strutt, 2003). Brink (2015) reminds the fact that domestic support is governed by AoA, actually regulating two "dyadic" types of policy space: (1) exemption space-limitless support under specific criteria, or unbound support; and (2) limited space-support under non-exempt policy, which is a subject to reduction commitments if the level of support is provided in excess to de minimis threshold, or bound total aggregate measurement of support.

Sachin (2020) notices that the WTO members, however, failed to find a consensus-based decision for a unified approach to domestic support disciplines due to the reason of status, thus, Heberli (2016) calls agriculture "a litmus test" for countries` priorities in this sector according to the level of their development. Brink and Orden (2020) set the idea that countries with larger agricultural sectors may accommodate larger amounts of support within the limits they face. Swinbank (2022) and Mensah (2024) argue that the scope of AoA spheres of regulation operating under a diverse array of circumstances poses real difficulties for policy-makers in building a "one-size-fits-all policy" framework. As stated by Shalom Ufuoma & Temitope (2023) in their overview of the contingency theory, governmental support policy in agriculture should take into account local conditions, including types of crops, farming practices and socio-economic factors, rather than applying such a framework. However, it can be mentioned here that application of some sort of general rules is practically viable.

In 2023, a group of interdisciplinary experts developed an initiative to revise the WTO AoA (TESS Forum on Trade, Environment & the SDGs, 2025). The Centre for Development and Environment at the University of Bern, the Institute of Agriculture and Trade Policy, as well as the International Institute for Sustainable Development are involved in this project. Researchers from Brazil, India and China are also among the participants. After three years of negotiations and exchange of practices, a draft Framework Agreement on Agriculture for Sustainable Food Systems was released (IISD, 2026b). In this document, the authors prescribe a more inclusive and fairer dialogue as a modality of international cooperation, suggesting the possibility of introducing trade and political measures based on national priorities and current circumstances, founded on the principles of international law

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and sustainable development. These are not fixed obligations to minimize damage to trade flows that come to the fore, but ensuring food security without setting bound limits. Thus, the reinterpretation of AoA allows countries to apply the necessary set of tools sufficient to maintain a normal level of development of the agricultural sector and taking into account their internal characteristics.

All of these motives are also relevant for BRICS, treating these countries as the largest producers of a number of agricultural products. As for Rahman et al. (2020) and Chu et al. (2018), BRICS constitute the rapidly developing trade bloc being specialized in a variety of product groups. Based on the data collected by Chryniewicz and Wojtaszek (2018) and Vartanyan (2024), "old" BRICS own one-third of the world`s farmland and 36% of arable land, 42% of forests, 29% of fish catch and 35% of freshwater reserves. Duric and Glauben (2024) also give the following figures as of 2021: five BRICS countries account for around 16% of world agricultural exports, with the biggest share for grain, meat, beverages, fruits and nuts, fats and oils, soybeans and oilseeds. As provided by Alvarez et al. (2023), BRICS members account for a significant share in world`s production of some agricultural products. The WTO Secretariat in its trade policy reports also gives an overview of product structure of BRICS agricultural trade (WTO Trade Policy Reviews). Brazil is the world's major exporter of such products as soybeans, poultry, bovine meat, sugar, coffee, corn and cotton. Russian Federation is the largest producer of milk, wheat, poultry, meat, swine and beef and veal. In India, the agricultural sector is dominated by small-scale farms which cultivate rice, wheat, coarse pulses and sugar cane; a substantial share of agricultural exports from India is comprised of rice, marine products, buffalo meat, spices and vegetable oils. Chinese agricultural exports are generally represented by biggest share of tobacco, rice, maize and wheat in the world`s exports. South Africa is among the world's largest exporters of citrus, sugar, wine and palm oil. Along these lines, initial BRICS countries are critical in terms of guaranteeing the global food security.

Kennedy et al. (2025) mention that within the field of food policy, the BRICS countries are witnessing not only demographic growth but also considerable economic development, leading to increase per capita incomes. This income growth drives a heightened demand for a more varied diet at a pace projected to surpass that of population expansion. This nutritional transition exerts additional pressure on agricultural systems, amplifying resource utilization and highlighting the critical need for approaches that concurrently foster sustainable production increases and guarantee food accessibility both in terms of availability and affordability for the expanding population. As FAOSTAT states, the population of BRICS grew by 0.6% from 2012 to 2023, with the contraction of agricultural production by 4.7% in the noticed period. According to the Global Hunger Index (GHI) ranking in 2025, BRICS

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countries face food insecurity in the various extents: the level of undernourishment in Brazil, Russia and China in 2022–2024 was detected by less than 2.5%, in South Africa – by 10.0%, in India – by 12.0% (GHI, 2025).

Bamidele (2025) also noticed that the global agricultural landscape has traditionally been dominated by developed countries; nonetheless, the emerging BRICS economies are increasingly disrupting this established hierarchy. Utilizing their expanding economic influence, BRICS countries are driving substantial transformations in agricultural production systems, trade dynamics and policy frameworks. These developments underscore a heightened focus on enhancing food security, boosting agricultural productivity, and tackling environmental issues pertinent to these emerging economies.

For instance, Sengupta (2026) enlists the recent suggestions brought in by certain WTO members, including BRICS, for the XIV Ministerial Conference in Yaounde, Cameroon. The African Group's submission on December 4th 2025 articulates comprehensive, development-focused recommendations underscoring the necessity of preserving sufficient policy space for developing countries to effectively enhance food security, bolster domestic agricultural production, and build resilience against global disruptions. Furthermore, it highlights the critical importance of advancing global food security in all its facets while reiterating a firm commitment to Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) provisions for developing countries and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). In contrast, the Brazilian proposal dated December 5th 2025 advocates for the proactive identification of potential "cross-pillar trade-offs" (for example, the usage of Green Box subsidies) which poses significant challenges for developing countries and LDCs by potentially constraining their policy options, even in areas where they have historically conceded. Additionally, the March 6th 2026 initiative titled "Emerging Agricultural Trade (EAT) issues" led by Australia, Brazil, Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, Switzerland and Ukraine consistently addresses various aspects of newly emerging agricultural policies and measures, with a particular emphasis on environmental and social outcomes.

Looking at BRICS as a bloc of emerging economies (not taking into account their status gained by the date of the WTO accession here), especially its core members (Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa), a diversity of directions it aims to cooperate in can be mentioned. Arapova and Lissovolik (2022) claim that BRICS have consistently defined themselves as a means to advocate for the priorities of the developing world within global institutions and builds an integrative and consolidating force for the Global South, advocating for global multipolarity, justice and non-discrimination. Lissovolik (2024) proceeds with the idea of BRICS representing developing countries in global governance by giving a list of potential partnership modalities of

BRICS+ and even BRICS++ circle, amid which the most important for this paper are possibility to serve as a platform for trade cooperation and formation of alliances in international organizations, including WTO. de Moura (2024) calls BRICS "a dynamic network" and a matrix of complex interactions on "multilateral, bilateral, regional and sub-regional levels".

Rozhkova and Salnikova (2020) indicate that, among other things, BRICS set itself such tasks as the sustainability of agriculture to changing climatic conditions, the impact of agriculture on development, including the fight against excessive protectionism in international trade in agricultural products. However, Pioch (2017) highlights the fact that in the current volatile conditions, there is an urgent need for trade protectionism reduction because BRICS have interestingly increased the mutual restrictions, as well as imposing trade barriers towards the third parties. Koval and Pioch (2017) claim that BRICS countries are active in applying measures to protect the domestic markets and promote exports. Redchinkova and Fomina (2015) name the key factors underlying the regulatory framework of developing countries in agriculture, which eventually have gone over the national borders, especially low labor productivity, lack of capital among small and medium-sized farms, underdevelopment of the agrarian infrastructure, etc.

As noticed by Glauber et al. (2021), from 2017 to 2021 some of BRICS countries used to bring in certain proposals on domestic support disciplines. For instance, China and India insisted on elimination of total AMS of developed countries beyond de minimis level and giving an opportunity for developing countries to use special and differential treatment to allow more flexibility in AMS reduction commitments. Russian Federation pointed out the necessity to reduce trade distorting support based on current level of imports, trade distorting support and volume of production. Brazil considered commitments of the WTO members to decrease the level of trade- and production-distorting domestic support. African group, including South Africa, set an objective to cap product-specific and non-product-specific support at de minimis amount. Moreover, Smeets (2017) marks the fact that BRICS countries represent a group without directly shared interests in agricultural sector, therefore, they used to join several forums on negotiations upon trade-related concerns. Brazil and South Africa belong to the Cairns group, which seeks to liberalize agricultural trade. China and India are involved into the G-33 coalition, also known as "Friends of special products", which aims to improve the flexibility of market access limits. Brazil, China, India and South Africa are actively engaging in the G-20 processes, advocating for reforms in agriculture.

Hereinafter, countries assumed are initial members of the group– Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa– which might be seen as the example of diverse domestic support practices for

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the BRICS+ circle. If taking into consideration all the findings presented by the scholarly, these countries can further provide a sort of "experience base" for formation of the WTO coalitions in negotiations on agriculture, actually, following the logic of one of potential partnership modalities within the bloc; i.e. to coordinate BRICS policies within WTO. These five countries are comparatively active in proposing their ideas and defending the interests of their domestic agricultural producers in WTO, sometimes having absolutely polar positions. Another important issue is that the BRICS countries differ greatly from each other not only in the measures applied, but also in the conditions of production, development of productive forces, climate and so on.

3. Methods

In order to compare the instruments and schemes implemented by BRICS in order to protect their agricultural producers, authors analyze the WTO database of notifications on domestic support and members` Consolidated Tariff Schedules (CTS), as well as Trade Policy Reviews (TPRs) and information compiled from the national agencies websites and relevant papers. The overall study is based on the approach used by AoA which considers the product chapters from the Harmonized System (HS) from 1 to 24, excluding fish and fish products, plus mannitol, sorbitol, essential oils, albuminous substances modified, torches and glues, finishing agents, hides and skins, silk and silk waste, wool and animal hair, cotton and others (WTO Secretariat, 1995).

According to AoA, aggregate measurement of support (AMS) should be understood as the annual level of domestic support, expressed in monetary terms, which is provided by a country for a specific agricultural product in favour of its producers. Total aggregate measurement of support (total AMS) means the sum of all the aggregate measurement of support provided in favour of certain agricultural producers. Likewise, equivalent measurement of support (EMS) refers to the yearly support amount, expressed in monetary terms, given to producers of a basic agricultural product through the implementation of one or more measures, where calculating this according to AMS methodology is impracticable. In the WTO terms, total AMS and EMS fall under a category of OTDS if they cause negative changes in agricultural market conjuncture and terms of competition. For example, export subsidies are a part of OTDS which is a subject to complete elimination in accordance with the decision approved at the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference.

There is a list of exemptions for all or specified WTO members, including the measures that a member is not obliged to calculate as a part of current total AMS; therefore, shall not be required to decrease the amount of such measures. In the framework of this paper, exceptions examined are those presented in Articles 6:2, 6:4, 6:5 and

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Annex 2 of AoA. Article 6:2 provides two basic types of domestic support measures which are presented in the form of either non-product-specific measures (investment subsidies typically accessible to agriculture in developing country members, along with agricultural input subsidies generally provided to low-income or resource-poor producers in those nations) or domestic support provided to producers in developing country members to promote the diversification away from illicit narcotic crop cultivation. Article 6:4 covers support for specific products or not tied to any agricultural product which does not go beyond an established share of total production value in a relevant year. Article 6:5 is connected with direct payments through production-limiting programs falling under specified conditions. Finally, Annex 2 sets a range of measures exempt from the reduction commitments; officially calculated as the Green Box measures in each member`s notification: general services, direct payments to agricultural producers, public stockholding for food security purposes and domestic food aid, further subdivided into specific mechanisms applied.

Turning back to calculation of domestic support, in line with the typical methodology used by the WTO members when forming their notifications of domestic support, authors address current total AMS as a measurement of OTDS comprising product-specific AMS and product-specific EMS. In addition, measures exempt from the reduction commitments are dealt with, including Green Box, Development programs and non-product-specific AMS.

4. Results

BRICS are enhancing food and trade collaboration with both developing and developed countries, working towards eliminating trade obstacles, and developing novel methods and instruments for agricultural cooperation (BRICS Portal, 2024). Additionally, BRICS are also involved into environmental and ecological preservation, overseeing food quality and safety, and implementing collaborative training initiatives to update agriculture and rural regions. The 9th BRICS leaders meeting held at the Xiamen International Conference Center in 2017 was highlighted by the Xiamen BRICS Leaders Declaration approved. Another document presented at the 2021 meeting in New Delhi was the BRICS Action Plan on Agricultural Cooperation, urging the countries involved to come together in this specific field. From the perspective of intra-group trade, BRICS countries export agricultural products to the markets within the group at a low level (UNCTAD, 2024). As it states, the rest of the world constitutes the most significant share, around 80%, in BRICS agricultural trade.

Since the conclusion of AoA, BRICS countries have taken a variety of measures in the area of agricultural protectionism to boost domestic production. A substantial share of domestic support measures of some

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of BRICS members are considered OTDS. These countries face de minimis allowance level of total AMS and are required to reduce the volume of domestic support to this number. Table 1 reflects the amount of domestic support, both bound and Green Box, calculated per unit of agricultural production value. This indicator shows the relative level of domestic agricultural production promoted by governmental support. For countries which do not face reduction commitments in their total AMS, mark "d.m." is put. As it can be noticed from the figures provided, the amount of Green Box payments is higher than those falling under the OTDS category, especially for India and China.

Considering the notifications on domestic support measures from the year of the last "old" BRICS country acceding WTO (i.e. Russian Federation in 2012) and given in the Table 2, current AMS was changed at the following compound annual rate: Russian Federation reduced this amount by 34.8%, meanwhile India and China increased current volumes of support by 7.4% and 16.2%, respectively; Brazil and South Africa notified on de minimis level of AMS. Taking into account the total AMS commitment level for period in question, or base total AMS, given as for 2012, Brazil and South Africa kept this number unchanged, while Russia has overviewed it five times throughout the period from 2012 to 2021. In 2012 and 2013 it used to be 9 bln USD, in 2014– 8.10 bln USD, in 2015– 7.20, in 2016– 6.30, in 2017– 5.40; since 2018 the level set has been 4.40 bln USD. India and China have no base total AMS and, therefore, any specific reduction commitments in their schedules. Interestingly, figures on domestic support value for China and South Africa are given in their national currencies, Russian Federation provides these notifications both in USD and national currency, while Brazil and India use only their calculations in USD. Due to dollar counting in notifications and, consequently, exchange rates fluctuations, Brazil, India and Russia in contrast to China and South Africa often have more policy space for domestic support expenditures.

Four BRICS countries– Brazil, Russia, India and China– provided product-specific AMS in the form of either market price support (MPS) or non-exempt direct payments (NeDP) for a large range of agricultural commodities (Figure 1). Information on the types of product-specific AMS of South Africa is not currently available through the WTO Notifications Database. According to the CTS of Brazil and South Africa, these two countries were the only from BRICS which used to apply export subsidies on a product-specific basis prior to the period reviewed (WTO Consolidated Tariff Schedules Database, 2024). The most subsidized products in Brazil were vegetable oils, sugar, fruits and vegetables processed. In South Africa, they are wheat and wheat products, maize and maize products, vegetables, fruits and nut preparations including fruit juices. These payments were eliminated to zero, in accordance with the decision approved by the WTO membership in 2015.

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Table 1. Level of domestic support, value of agricultural production ratio for BRICS countries

Country	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Current total AMS (1000 USD) per unit of agricultural production value (USD)													
Brazil	d.m.	d.m.	d.m.	d.m.	d.m.	d.m.	d.m.	d.m.	d.m.	d.m.	–	–	–
Russian Federation	1.20	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	–	–	–
India	d.m.	d.m.	d.m.	d.m.	d.m.	d.m.	0.27	0.35	0.39	0.44	0.38	0.39	1.34
China	0.13	0.22	0.24	0.30	0.16	0.46	0.40	0.38	d.m.	d.m.	d.m.	–	–
South Africa	d.m.	d.m.	d.m.	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Green box measurement (1000 USD) per unit of agricultural production value (USD)													
Brazil	0.62	0.43	0.16	0.19	0.17	0.20	0.14	0.11	0.10	0.09	–	0.20	–
Russian Federation	0.36	0.60	0.59	0.42	0.38	0.45	0.44	0.45	0.41	0.35	–	–	–
India	0.92	0.91	1.05	0.94	1.00	1.67	1.22	1.67	2.45	2.35	2.66	2.73	6.23
China	1.42	1.61	1.76	2.25	2.54	2.08	2.31	2.25	2.31	2.25	2.32	–	–
South Africa	0.03	1.50	1.31	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

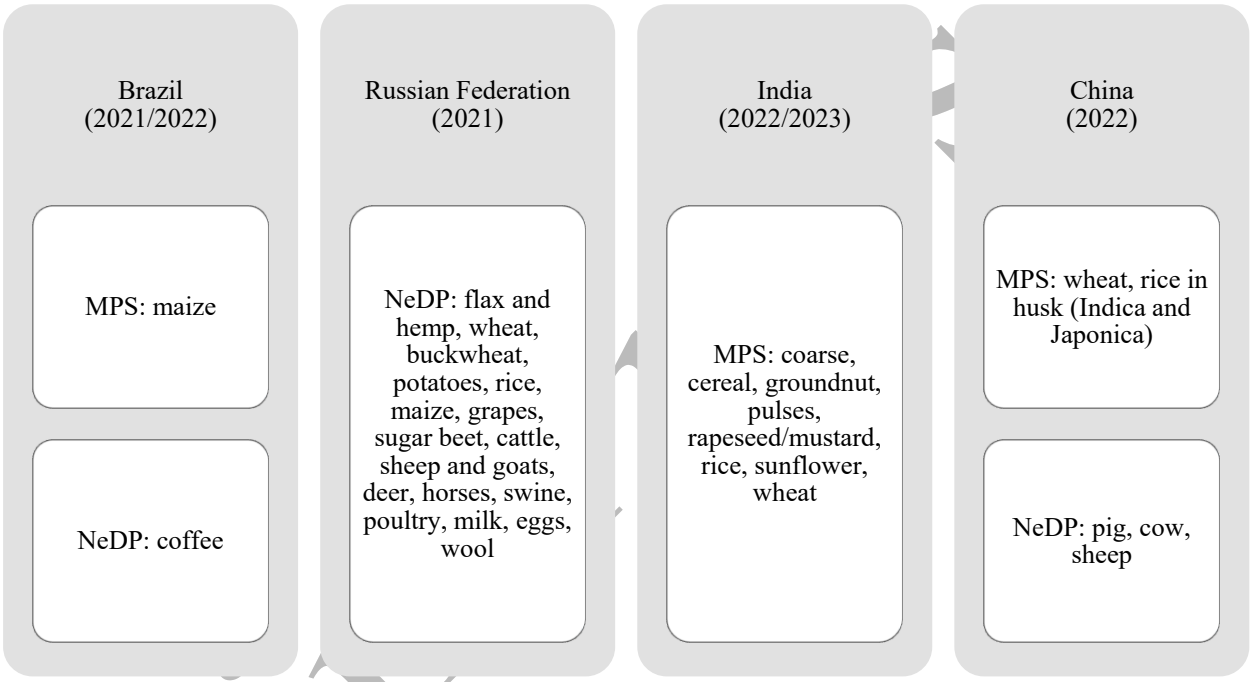
Source: Compiled by the authors based on WTO Notifications Database, FAOSTAT and World Development Indicators Database

Table 2. Commitments limiting subsidization of agriculture in BRICS countries

Country	Base total AMS	Absolute value of reduction commitments and reviewed period	Note
Brazil	0.91 bln USD	d.m. (2012–2021)	No reduction commitments
Russian Federation	9.00 bln USD	5.72 bln USD (2012–2021)	Current AMS being reduced
India	–	2.68 bln USD (2012–2024)	Current AMS is growing
China	–	143.67 bln CNY (2012–2022)	Current AMS is growing
South Africa	2.02 bln Rand	d.m. (2012–2014)	No reduction commitments

Source: Compiled by the authors based on WTO Notifications Database

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Source: Compiled by the authors based on the WTO Notifications Database

Figure 1. Product-specific AMS provided by BRICS for the latest available period.

As for non-product-specific AMS calculated for BRICS countries, the variety of instruments is compiled in the Table 3. These are the budgetary outlays which initially are not prohibited, however, are subject to reduction commitments. For South Africa this information is not available due to the de minimis level of support provided by the Government.

Table 3. Non-product-specific AMS provided by BRICS for the latest available period

Country	Measures provided
Brazil (2022/2023)	Debt rescheduling programs, insurance programs, non-product-specific production and marketing credit
Russian Federation (2021)	Subsidies of the following types: energy, pedigree livestock, elite seed, for mineral and organic fertilizers and pesticides, for interest rates on credits and loans – short term and investment, taken by small farms/business, fuel and lubricants, for insurance of risk of loss of agricultural crop and livestock, for compound feed, for reclamation network maintenance costs, for establishment and care of perennial plantations, for the delivery of seeds to Extreme North areas and regions of equal status, other plant and livestock production. Other mechanisms: leasing of means of production on preferential terms, capital production investments, transportation of agricultural cargoes on preferential terms, development of traditional sectors in agriculture, development of livestock family farms, writing off debts on calculated penalties and fines, other preferential rate lending.
India (2024/2025)	Insurance premium and interest subsidies
China (2022)	Subsidies to the procurement and application of agricultural machinery, actual agricultural producer subsidy

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the WTO Notifications Database (Atri et al., 2023)

Taking into consideration domestic support programs included in the Green Box, BRICS countries mainly increased the level of such support. India, in 2012–2025, have boosted the application of Annex 2 measures annually by 5.1% on average; China, from 2012 to 2022, by 5.4%; South Africa in 2012–2014 (no notifications after this period) by 2.3%. In their turn, Brazil and Russia faced a decline in the Green Box instruments applied, by 17.9% in 2012–2022 and 0.2% in 2012–2021, respectively. As for the development programs initiated by BRICS, two members, Brazil and India, used to implement the referred instruments. The former provided the investment subsidies generally available to agriculture (investment credit) and investment subsidies available to low-income or resource-poor producers (production credit), while the latter introduced subsidies in the form of production credit only.

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5. Discussion

Moving forward, in order to build a more complete image of the state support measures representing an exception to the rules of AoA and applied by BRICS with respect to the agricultural sector, the authors consider each country`s mechanisms applied according to the range of state programs.

Brazil uses three main components; for instance, market price policy, rural credits and crop insurance subsidies; in order to support commercial agriculture and small family-based farms. Brazilian government provides a broad range of assistance programs targeting different categories of producers, including concessional credit lines, price support mechanisms and insurance premium subsidies. These programs include Minimum Price Guarantee Policy, Rural Insurance Premium Subsidy Program, Crop Plan 2024/2025 (Plano Safra), Program for Financing Sustainable Agricultural Production Systems (RenovAgro), Transforming Brazil's Agrifood System Program and National Program for Agricultural Zoning of Climatic Risks (Ministério da Agricultura e Pecuária, 2024; World Bank Group, 2024a). The products supported by governmental programs are: barley, Brazilian wax, canola, cashew nut, cassava, cassava flour, cassava starch, castor beans, coffee, cotton, cottonseed, edible beans, ethanol, garlic, grapes, guaraná, jute, maize, malva, milk, oat, orange, peanuts, rice, silk cocoon, sisal, sorghum, soybeans, sugar cane, sunflower, triticale and wheat.

Russian Federation develops domestic support programs including in them some measures which have minimal trade-distorting effects. The agricultural policy of the Russian Federation is constituted within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU, 2023). Member States of the EAEU decided on the agro-industrial policy which outlines the balanced development of agriculture and food production, fair competition and protection of the interests of domestic agricultural producers. Russian government provides a combination of support programs, including interest rate subsidies, support to capital investments, production subsidies on output, insurance premiums and so on. Such measures are applied based on the Program for Comprehensive Development of Rural Areas, Development of Agriculture and Regulation of Agricultural Products, Raw Materials and Food Markets, Federal Scientific and Technical Program for the Development of Agriculture for 2017–2030, State Program for the Effective Involvement of Agricultural Lands into Circulation and the Development of the Land Reclamation Complex of the Russian Federation (Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation, 2024a). Russian domestic producers of agricultural products receive export credits, insurance and guarantees to exporters, etc. Green Box support included pest and disease control, infrastructural services, training services and decoupled income support. As for OTDS, these were the

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credit lines, livestock subsidies, capital investments and some product-specific measures targeted at milk, cattle, crops, barley and wheat.

In India, some products are the subject to minimum import prices, including cashew nuts, black and green pepper, cardamom. Import is also regulated by state trading enterprises: government procures rice, wheat, coconuts and coconut oil, fertilizers. Production of some commodities is the issue of food security of different regions of India; therefore, governmental companies produce potatoes, onions, edible oil and seeds in order to regulate food supply under extraordinary circumstances. There is also a special scheme for perishable products procured by state enterprises at a predetermined market intervention price covering production costs. All in all, there central government support programs and measures applied have a wide scope providing comprehensive and diverse assistance in rural development: Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (Prime Minister's Farmer's Tribute Fund), Pradhan Mantri Kisan MaanDhan Yojana (Prime Minister's Pension System for Small and Marginal Farmers), Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (Prime Minister's Program for Insurance of Farmers` Yields), Modified Interest Subvention Scheme, Agriculture Infrastructure Fund, Formation and Promotion of new 10,000 FPOs, National beekeeping and Honey Mission, Market Intervention Scheme and Price support Scheme, Namo Drone Didi, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (Remunerative Approaches for Agriculture and Allied sector Rejuvenation) and Krishonnati Yojana (Green Revolution Program), including a list of subprograms and governmental schemes aimed at soil health and rainforests safety, as well as at particular products like agro-forestry, oil palm, seeds and planting materials, horticulture, bamboo, etc. (Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, 2024).

In China, domestic support notified under the Green Box increased year to year, along with a substantial decrease in OTDS measures. Green Box includes infrastructure services, advisory services, pest and disease control, environmental programs, public stockholding, payments for relief from natural disasters, and so on. OTDS covers such product lines as corn, rice, wheat, cotton, soybean, pigs, sheep and cows, peanuts, rapeseed, sugar and others. Import of soybeans, wheat, maize, rice, sugar, tobacco and cotton to China is the subject to state trading enterprises. There is a minimum purchase price policy implemented for rice and wheat. Grain reserves are maintained by the central government and local governments of administrative regions in order to contribute to food security of the country. Interestingly, there are specific subsidies for selected administrative regions, such as Xinzhou Municipality of Shanxi Province, Alxa League of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Fuling District of Chongqing Municipality, Guangdong Province, Guizhou Province, Yunnan Province, Tibet Autonomous Region, Ningxia Hui Autonomous

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Region, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Dalian City of Liaoning Province and Qingdao City of Shandong Province (Fan et al., 2023).

According to the New Development Plan 2030, South Africa aims at pursuit of long-term land reform which provides redress and equal access to land and support, especially for the individuals who used to be disadvantaged during the period of apartheid– so called "deracialization" of the rural economy. Government in South Africa provides loans to the commercial farming sector, post-settlement support, extension services, farmer training, as well as assistance in the revitalization of crucial infrastructure and access to critically important factors of production. These objectives are settled within the programs: Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan, Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, South Africa Good Agricultural Practices Certification Program (SA-GAP), Ilima/Letsema, Agro-Energy Fund, Cannabis Master Plan, Poultry Master Plan, Recapitalization and Development Programme, Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, 2024b; South African Government, 2024a).

The endeavor of BRICS to serve as an alliance in the WTO negotiations on agricultural issues is to be shaped into a rules-based mechanism consistent with the respective disciplines. For instance, at the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference in February 2024 G-33 coalition, including China and India as the BRICS countries, and the African Group decided to make amendments to AoA exceptions from reduction commitments in the field of domestic support (WTO, 2024). According to this decision, notwithstanding anything stated in AoA, developing and least-developed WTO members should be allowed to implement public stockholding for food security purposes provided these programmes are consistent with the following criteria: (a) acquisition of foodstuffs at prices set by the Government aimed at maintaining the livelihood of low-income or resource-poor farmers; and (b) acquisition of foodstuffs at prices set by the Government and their distribution to ensure food security. India has notably pushed for a permanent solution to public stockholding since the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference, invoking so-called "peace clause" so to justify the implementation of public stockholding programmes temporarily and insisting strictly on special and differential treatment for developing countries (Business Standard, 2024; The Hindu Business Online, 2024).

Summarizing all the studied aspects of the BRICS countries' trade policy in the field of agriculture and taking into account the desire of participants to form a more effective and inclusive system of domestic support, the following areas were identified that are relevant for BRICS in the medium term:

a) **Institutional field.** In April 2025, Brazil announced the establishment of the BRICS Partnership for Land Restoration, an

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initiative aimed at consolidating efforts to rehabilitate degraded land, conserve soil quality, and enhance the sustainable management of water resources (Ministério da Agricultura e Pecuária, 2025). This partnership emphasizes the application of scientific methodologies and innovative financing mechanisms and fosters collaboration among governments, the private sector and local communities to implement effective restoration strategies.

Another critical area of focus is food security. In February 2025, the BRICS Agriculture Working Group convened its inaugural meeting, addressing key topics such as food security, sustainable agricultural production, trade facilitation, infrastructure development, and the formulation of strategic agreements (TV BRICS, 2025). Furthermore, the BRICS Congress in June 2025 intended to ratify the formation of the BRICS Agrarian Alliance. This alliance, proposed by the Russian Federation, aims to unify member countries' efforts in agriculture and environmental technologies, presenting an alternative framework to Western cooperation models. Consequently, this initiative is anticipated to provide a constructive pathway around the challenges faced in WTO agricultural negotiations, as BRICS nations have already expressed their commitment to establishing a coalition under this institutional framework.

b) Coalitions of interest. In spite the fact that BRICS express a common intention to counter rising protectionism and allow developing economies to play a greater role in the WTO decision-making, their approaches to domestic support are formulated inside the groups of interests which co-exist under the WTO umbrella. Nevertheless, modalities of cooperation within the framework of BRICS imply sufficient freedom of its members in terms of the creation of various coalitions at this interregional level. Taking into consideration the expansion of the grouping, it is to be a sort of good practice to gather together the members with sometimes absolutely polar proposals in negotiations on agriculture and allow to cooperate with their adherents without being under the pressure to bring the decisions to a common denominator.

c) Resource allocation. It is necessary to reallocate the funds included in the budgets for direct support. Among the most important areas that can be seen as the most potential for the resource redistribution there is the development of infrastructure that reduces producer costs and promotes rural development to attract labour force. Moreover, a vital point is innovation growth which through the bunch of programs on preferential loans, leasing and compensation for investment costs can help in developing a strategy for qualified personnel training and international

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cooperation in science and education in the agro-industrial complex.

d) **Small-scale farmers development**. According to the sustainable development agenda, it is necessary to pay special attention to small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises which play an important role in ensuring the stability of the rural economy, combating poverty and stimulating environmental practices.

e) **Regional discrepancies**. As mentioned earlier, BRICS countries differ significantly in the specifics of the historical background, terms of economy, climatic aspects, development of production capacity, level of the entrepreneurial initiative, presence of resource support that works effectively for agriculture. All this justifies the need to take into account these individual characteristics of the countries and the impossibility of a "one-size-fits-all" framework elaboration in agriculture.

Mutual trade relations between the BRICS countries in the field of agriculture are at the stage of ongoing negotiations to strengthen trade cooperation. It is important to note that individual BRICS countries account for a significant share of global agricultural production. "Old" countries of the bloc are competitively capable of exporting a diversified range of agricultural products, including various types of meat, dairy products, sugar, wheat, cotton, beverages, fruits and vegetables. In order to overcome socio-economic limitations and differences in internal environment at the market, development of the BRICS agricultural sector requires a combination of actions by all stakeholders at all levels of management of the agricultural sector, including domestic support. As it can be seen from the list of programs implemented by BRICS, the variety of instruments employed in domestic support policies forms a sufficient policy space to manoeuvre under the WTO law.

6. Conclusions

Despite the fact that the BRICS declare their readiness to liberalize trade and reduce OTDS measures, protectionist policies are somehow implemented by the states to protect their national producers. In recent years, BRICS have been choosing the Green Box measures, which include those restrictions that are an exception to the law of the agreement on agriculture and are quite acceptable– as long as they do not have a significant impact on foreign trade relations. Russian Federation and India are the only countries from "old" BRICS which face reduction commitments in the field of domestic support, whereas Brazil (throughout the whole reviewed period), China (from 2020) and South Africa (in 2012–2014 for which data is present only) have a relatively sufficient policy space for the implementation of minimal trade-distorting measures at their disposal. Green Box, or Annex 2

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programs are used actively by all the BRICS countries, with the greatest interest to these types of instruments from the Indian and Chinese side. Brazil and India also tend to apply certain development mechanisms in order to ensure the livelihood of low-income and resource-poor farmers, which is of critical importance for G33 coalition including China and India within their negotiations on public stockholding for food security purposes.

BRICS countries are directly involved in the Doha Round of the WTO negotiations. They do not have a consolidated position on agricultural trade, as their long-term interests range from full-fledged trade liberalization to increased flexibility to apply protectionist measures defending the interests of domestic agricultural producers. The most important task for the BRICS, as well as many other countries that are members of WTO, is to make certain reforms in the field of legislation for agriculture; due to the fact that this area is one of the most difficult within the framework of the Doha Development Agenda.

As for the further research niches, if taking into account the countries that have already joined the bloc in 2024 and 2025, and those states that are currently receiving the status of dialogue partners, consideration of BRICS in a "plus" format will provide a comparative understanding of government support measures for agriculture. On the other hand, it is vital to look at the fact the accession of new participants poses certain obstacles for cooperation in the field of agricultural development and formulation of a unified negotiating position within the WTO for BRICS as a potential coalition.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

Ethical considerations

The authors have completely considered ethical issues, including informed consent, plagiarism, data fabrication, misconduct, and/or falsification, double publication and/or redundancy, submission, etc. This article was not authored by artificial intelligence.

Data availability

The dataset generated and analyzed during the current study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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