

# QTMUN 2024

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## United Nations Nutrition

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DIRECTOR  
Tom Cai

VICE DIRECTOR  
Kayla Litschko

MODERATOR  
Emily Rosevear

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# Equity Disclaimers

Throughout this committee, delegates will be engaging in complex debates and discussions covering a wide array of topics. As UTMUN seeks to provide an enriching educational experience that facilitates understanding of the implications of real-world issues, the content of our committees may involve sensitive or controversial subject matter for the purposes of academia and accuracy. We ask that delegates be respectful, professional, tactful, and diplomatic when engaging with all committee content, representing their assigned country's or character's position in an equitable manner, communicating with staff and other delegates, and responding to opposing viewpoints.

*This Background Guide and UN Nutrition presents topics that may be distressing to some Delegates, including but not limited to the following:*

- Animal Abuse
- Eating Disorders and Obesity Issues

UTMUN recognizes the sensitivity associated with many of our topics, and we encourage you to be aware of and set healthy boundaries that work for you. This may include: preparing yourself before reading this background guide, seeking support after reading the background guide, or filling out the committee switch form beforehand. We ask that all Delegates remain considerate of the boundaries that other Delegates set.

UTMUN expects that all discussions amongst delegates will remain productive and respectful of one another. If you have any equity concerns or need assistance in setting boundaries or navigating sensitive subject matter or have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to reach out to our Chief Equity Officer, Harvi Karatha, at [equity@utmun.org](mailto:equity@utmun.org). We want you to feel safe and comfortable at UTMUN.



If you wish to switch committees after having read the content warnings for this committee for purely an equity-based concern, please do the following:

1. Fill out the UTMUN 2024 Committee Switch Request Form, <https://forms.gle/EVf1kp6r6ACnBooR6>.

If you have any equity concerns, equity-based questions, or delegate conflicts, please do any of the following:

1. Email [equity@utmun.org](mailto:equity@utmun.org) to reach Harvi Karatha or email [deputy.equity@utmun.org](mailto:deputy.equity@utmun.org) to reach Iva Zivaljevic or reach out to me at [nutrition@utmun.org](mailto:nutrition@utmun.org).
2. Fill out the (Anonymous if preferred) [UTMUN Equity Contact Form](#).
3. Notify/Ask any staff member to connect you to Harvi Karatha or [Iva Zivaljevic](#).

# Model United Nations at U of T Code of Conduct

The below code of conduct applies to all attendees of UTMUN 2024 for the entire duration of the conference, and any conference-related activities (including but not limited to committee sessions, conference socials, committee breaks, and the opening and closing ceremonies).

1. Harassment and bullying in any form will not be tolerated, the nature of which includes, but is not limited to, discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, ethnicity, colour, religion, sex, age, mental and physical disabilities, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression,

a. Harassment and bullying include, but are not limited to, insulting and/or degrading language or remarks; threats and intimidation; and intentional (direct or indirect).

discrimination and/or marginalization of a group and/or individual;

i. The above prohibition on harassment, bullying, and inappropriate behaviour extends to any and all behaviour as well as written and verbal communication during the conference, including notes, conversation both during and outside committees, and general demeanour at all conference events;

ii. UTMUN reserves the right to determine what constitutes bullying and/or inappropriate behaviour toward any individual and/or group;

b. Attendees must not engage in any behaviour that constitutes physical violence or the threat of violence against any groups and/or individuals, including sexual violence and harassment, such as, but not limited to,

i. Unwelcome suggestive or indecent comments about one's appearance;

ii. Nonconsensual sexual contact and/or behaviour between any individuals and/or groups of individuals;

iii. Sexual contact or behaviour between delegates and staff members is strictly forbidden;

2. UTMUN expects all attendees to conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner at all times during the conference. Specific expectations, include, but are not limited to,

a. Attendees must, if able, contribute to the general provision of an inclusive conference and refrain from acting in a manner that restricts other attendees' capacity to learn and thrive in an intellectually stimulating environment;

b. Attendees must adhere to the dress code, which is Western business attire;

i. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis depending on the attendees' ability to adhere to the previous sub-clause;

ii. Attendees are encouraged to contact Chief Equity Officer, Harvi Karatha, at [equity@utmun.org](mailto:equity@utmun.org) with questions or concerns about the dress code or conference accessibility;



- c. Attendees must refrain from the use of cultural appropriation to represent their character and/or country, including the use of cultural dress, false accent, and any behaviour that perpetuates a national or personal stereotype;
- d. Delegates must not use music, audio recordings, graphics, or any other media at any time unless approved and requested to be shared by the Dais and/or the Chief Equity Officer, Harvi Karatha at [equity@utmun.org](mailto:equity@utmun.org);
- e. Attendees must abide by instructions and/or orders given by conference staff, members;
  - i. Attendees are exempt from this above sub-clause only if the instructions and/or orders given are unreasonable or inappropriate;

3. Delegates, staff, and all other conference participants are expected to abide by Ontario and Canadian laws and Toronto by-laws, as well as rules and regulations specific to the University of Toronto. This includes, but is not limited to,

- a. Attendees, regardless of their age, are strictly prohibited from being under the influence and/or engaging in the consumption of illicit substances, such as alcohol or illicit substances for the duration of the conference;
- b. Attendees are prohibited from smoking (cigarettes or e-cigarettes, including vapes) on University of Toronto property;
- c. Attendees must refrain from engaging in vandalism and the intentional and/or reckless destruction of any public or private property, including conference spaces, venues, furniture, resources, equipment, and university buildings;
  - i. Neither UTMUN nor any representatives of UTMUN is responsible for damage inflicted by attendees to property on or off University of Toronto campus;
  - ii. Individuals will be held responsible for any damages.

4. The Secretariat reserves the right to impose restrictions on delegates and/or attendees for not adhering to/violating any of the above stipulations. Disciplinary measures include, but are not limited to,

- a. Suspension from committee, in its entirety or for a specific period of time;
- b. Removal from the conference and/or conference venue(s);
- c. Disqualification from awards;
- d. Disqualification from participation in future conference-related events.

5. UTMUN reserves the right to the final interpretation of this document.

For further clarification on UTMUN's policies regarding equity or conduct, please see this [form](#). For any questions/concerns, or any equity violations that any attendee(s) would like to raise, please contact UTMUN's Chief Equity Officer, Harvi Karatha, at [equity@utmun.org](mailto:equity@utmun.org) or fill out this anonymous Equity Contact Form: <https://forms.gle/Psc5Luxp22T3c9Zz8>.

## Letter from the Director

*Hello delegates!*

Welcome to UN Nutrition in ECOSOC at UTMUN 2024, and I am your Director for this conference, along with Kayla as your Vice Director. I am a first year student at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music, and this will be my 12th conference in Model UN. The committee will be discussing two topics, the Food Crisis and the Elimination of Malnutrition. Delegates are tasked with finding solutions to the imminent food crisis and subsequent malnutrition caused by various factors outlined in the background guide below. Looking forward to seeing you all at the conference!

*Best,*

Tom Cai

[nutrition@utmun.org](mailto:nutrition@utmun.org)



## Position Paper Policy

At UTMUN 2024, position papers are required to qualify for awards. Each committee will also give out one Best Position Paper award. Only delegates in Ad Hoc are exempt from submitting a position paper. To learn more about position paper writing, formatting and submission, please check out the position paper guidelines. Please read through the guidelines carefully as this page will describe content recommendations, formatting requirements and details on citations. If you have any questions about position paper writing, feel free to contact your Dais via your committee email or reach out to [academics@utmun.org](mailto:academics@utmun.org).

## Introduction

Malnutrition has always been an issue throughout the epochs. From the worn enamel of Ancient Egypt due to sand and dust in their bread, to the famines of the 20th century due to war and mismanagement, malnutrition has remained despite the advancements in technology and society. Malnutrition can be defined in broad terms as imbalances in a person's intake of nutrients, both in terms of "too much" and "too little." In the 21st century, two recurring themes have presented themselves as the main causes of malnutrition: supply-related concerns and the overabundance of processed foods.

## Definitions & Abbreviations:

### **PROTECTIONISM**

Referring to the economic policy of restraining trade between nations through measures such as tariffs, quotas, and domestic subsidies.

### **COMMON FISHERIES POLICY**

The fishing policy of the European Union, relating to quotas and defined territories in which member states can fish in.

### **TARIFFS**

Taxes on imported goods.

### **BREXIT**

British exit from the European Union.

### **IMF**

International Monetary Fund.

### **NAFTA**

North American Free Trade Agreement.

### **USMCA**

United states - Mexico - Canada agreement

### **SPAM**

Spiced Ham, original form rarely used.

### **WHO**

World Health Organization

# Topic 1: Trade and Bureaucratic Concerns

## Subtopic 1: Protectionism and Cost of Living

Protectionism refers to the economic policy of restraining trade between nations through measures such as tariffs, quotas, and domestic subsidies.<sup>1</sup> The policy exists to protect domestic producers against high competition from international producers.<sup>2</sup> Protectionism is believed to increase economic growth domestically as domestic producers receive revenue instead of foreign producers, along with the increase of employment for said domestic corporations and decreased reliance on foreign trade.<sup>3</sup>

The increase of domestic revenue for producers happens for a fairly simple reason.<sup>4</sup> Foreign suppliers are restricted in the market either by tariffs or quotas, and the domestic producers pick up the shortfall in supply in the domestic market and earn extra revenue through the extra quantity of products they are selling, increasing a country's GDP.<sup>5</sup> The increase in the quantity of products supplied by a company means corporations will need to hire more workers to produce said products and thus increase jobs in the country, which is an economic goal that all countries strive for.<sup>6</sup> This naturally means that blue-collar workers and corporate leaders will support a protectionist policy, details of which the case studies provided below will cover.<sup>7</sup>

A decreased reliance on foreign trade is generally the selling point of protectionism for populist and conservative politicians, due to reliance on foreign trade being seen as a risk to national security, especially if said trade is for necessities and raw materials such as steel, coal, and food products.<sup>8</sup> Some countries in history (and today, even) have operated on a policy of autarky to ensure that there is no national security risk at all from imports.<sup>9</sup> These countries generally have thrown down the mantle of autarky after a decade, as these countries have seen a decrease in living standards due to shortages of raw materials and food products being able to be produced domestically.<sup>10</sup> Nowadays most countries operate on some sort of protectionist policy in terms of a few specific key industries, while other countries tend to have protectionist policies for most domestic industries, the details and effects of which will be covered in case studies.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ellie Tragakes, "Economics for the IB Diploma," 3rd Edition, (Cambridge University Press 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



## Case Study: The Food Crisis in Post-Brexit Britain

Brexit, or the British Exit from the European Union, was a 4 year long political project by the government to leave the European Union's multitudes of organizations, from the Common Market and the Customs Union to the European Court of Justice and the European Parliament.<sup>12</sup> The exit important to this topic will be the exit from the Common Market (along with the exit from the subsidiary policies such as the Common Fisheries Policy). The Common Market is a European economic area comprising EU members and a few others (Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein).<sup>13</sup> It comprises economic tenets such as free movement of goods, capital, and labor, removal of non-tariff barriers and subsequent integration of regulatory frameworks, and harmonized policies of production (such as common fisheries).<sup>14</sup>

The British food market (along with most industries) was highly dependent on EU trade.<sup>15</sup> The majority of British food products were imported from France, Germany, and other places, and the British reciprocated by trading its luxury products and commodities to Europe.<sup>16</sup> The UK was famous for its exports of Rolls-Royces, machinery, and alcohol, to Europe and especially Germany.<sup>17</sup> The specialization of the British economy on commodity production combined with the lack of arable land to support its 65 million Britons had left it heavily reliant on foreign production of food and imports from the EU.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Dearbail Jordan, "How dependent is the UK on the EU for food?" BBC News, December 23, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-55408788>

30% of all foodstuffs consumed in the UK are imported from the EU.<sup>19</sup> The 30% seems rather small but considering that the UK also must import food from other countries, which when considered, raises the number to around 50%.<sup>20</sup> This number also does not cover the main issue with the UK: the changing of the seasons.<sup>21</sup> The British Retail Consortium estimates that the UK produces 90% of its lettuce during the summer, while it imports 90% of its lettuce during the winter.<sup>22</sup> Similar numbers are present for cabbage, fruits, and tomatoes.<sup>23</sup> The British have no problem producing foodstuffs during the summer, supply is plentiful, however they had to import most of their foodstuffs during the winter.<sup>24</sup> This was no problem as long as supply chains were kept open and trade barriers were nonexistent.<sup>25</sup>

The Common Market provided the British with a plentiful supply of European goods.<sup>26</sup> Whatever could not be produced during the off-season could easily be purchased from the Mediterranean countries or the greenhouses of Germany as if they were domestically produced.<sup>27</sup> Non-existent tariffs combined with streamlined supply chains meant that the extra cost of importing from foreign lands was as cheap as if they were domestically produced.<sup>28</sup> In some cases, it was even cheaper to import from abroad than to buy domestically due to domestic supply chain issues.<sup>29</sup> It used to be common to see Norwegian salmon in London Sainsburys despite Scottish salmon being domestically available.<sup>30</sup> This is because domestic supply chains were not as effective as international ones, and this made the quality of life very high in the UK, as the country could live as if it had access to all the resources of the European continent.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Matt Mathers, "Why supermarkets like Tesco and Morrisons had empty shelves over the weekend" The Independent, February 23, 2023, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/supermarket-food-shortages-shelves-empty-b2287893.html>

However, this form of open market also brought along some unhappy faces in the UK. As mentioned above, Scottish salmon was essentially nonexistent in the supermarkets of cities below Yorkshire.<sup>32</sup> This was in combination with the unpopular Common Fisheries Policy implemented in 2009, which dictated that the fisheries across the European Union were to be shared amongst the member states of the EU.<sup>33</sup> A common British criticism of the Common Fisheries Policy was that Spanish and French trawlers would take to the English Channel and the North Sea and clean out the salmon stock before the British trawlers could even set sail.<sup>34</sup> Having taken into consideration the British 200-mile economic exclusive zone being completely taken over by European trawlers, it is easy to see why the EU common market was so unpopular.<sup>35</sup> Nationwide, the fishermen were being outcompeted in the waters and in the markets.<sup>36</sup>

The fishermen were only one unhappy industry out of many.<sup>37</sup> British farmers were disgruntled by the import of cheaper grain, meat, and dairy products from the EU, which decreased their profits as in general it was more expensive to produce these products domestically than say for example France or the Netherlands.<sup>38</sup> Vauxhall and other non-luxury car brands were being outcompeted by equally cheap yet higher quality Volkswagens and Audis, and even the luxury brands such as Jaguar and Bentley had stiff competition from European brands such as Ferrari and Porsche.<sup>39</sup> Many British companies were shrinking since the 1960s due to competition from the EU, laying off workers in droves, and Margaret Thatcher's privatization was only delaying the inevitable collapse of British industry.<sup>40</sup> It seemed as if protectionism and leaving the EU's many markets and policies was the way to prevent the complete domination of the UK market by European goods.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

When the British left the EU on the 31st of January 2020, it seemed as if the problems were over.<sup>42</sup> Now that the European trawlers had left British waters and German cars were no longer flooding the market, surely British producers could earn more profits? It was indeed the case that British producers took over the shortfall left by the European companies leaving British markets due to the new imposition of duties and tariffs on EU goods entering the UK.<sup>43</sup> However, it was ever the case that in the food market, British producers were unable to fully cover up for the loss in supply.<sup>44</sup> By March of 2022 there were already reports of empty shelves in supermarkets where previously European food occupied.<sup>45</sup> Cabbage previously produced by the Europeans were now being produced by British farms, however the latter was never able to produce as much as the European continent.<sup>46</sup> With food supplies dwindling, news that one in ten households report food insecurity hit the newspapers.<sup>47</sup> Statistics showed that up to one million British adults had gone entire days without eating due to the lack of supplies in supermarkets across the nation.<sup>48</sup>

Continuing to today, along with growing inflation in the world, the food crisis had led to the UK importing foreign necessities at a high markup due to tariffs, which has led to the standard of living in the UK to drop significantly as the working class must spend more of their disposable income on food products, the same food products as 8 years ago, yet at nearly double the price.<sup>49</sup> The protectionist methods had indeed led to food producers being dominant in the British market, as Scottish salmon finally entered Sainsburys in Gloucester, however the common people of Britain have suffered from high prices and hiccups in availability.<sup>50</sup> Brexit and subsequent protectionism of the British food industry has led to a food crisis in the UK, due to the lack of domestic production capability.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Wikimedia Foundation, "Collapse of the Atlantic Northwest Cod Fishery," Wikipedia, June 30, 2023, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collapse\\_of\\_the\\_Atlantic\\_northwest\\_cod\\_fishery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collapse_of_the_Atlantic_northwest_cod_fishery)



## Subtopic 2: Supply Chain Collapse and Trade Dependency

With the new wave of protectionism already at the world's doorsteps, many of the unfortunate effects of protectionism on food supply have been demonstrated in ways that have been predicted by economists and financial forums worldwide.

The first effect of protectionism is reduced availability.<sup>52</sup> Import tariffs and quotas will limit the quantity of imported food products entering a country.<sup>53</sup> Naturally the decrease in the quantity of imported food will lead to a shortage of food in the short term as domestic producers react to the sudden increase in demand for domestically produced food.<sup>54</sup> There is also a possibility that a shortage of food products in the long term as well as domestic producers realize they simply are unable to produce said food products enough to meet demand due to small land area making further production impossible or production costs making further production unprofitable.<sup>55</sup> The decrease in imported food may also cause seasonal products, such as cherries, to be unavailable to consumers throughout the non-seasonal months, due to imported cherries being nonexistent or extremely costly.<sup>56</sup>

The second effect of protectionism is higher prices, as detailed above.<sup>57</sup> When barriers to trade are imposed, the cost of imported food products tends to increase due to tariffs, transportation costs, and other trade barriers (such as customs licensing).<sup>58</sup> This can result in higher prices for imported food items, which will have a direct impact on the affordability of certain food products for consumers.<sup>59</sup> If trade barriers are in place ubiquitously throughout food industries, this will affect the working class's diet significantly as they will not be able to afford many food products due to the increased prices.<sup>60</sup> Malnutrition and other forms of dietary restrictions may set in to the working class, causing the wealth gap in said country to increase and decreasing economic equality, which may lead to social and political instability if severe enough.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ellie Tragakes, "Economics for the IB Diploma," 3rd Edition (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

The third effect of protectionism is vulnerability to supply shocks.<sup>62</sup> Protectionism can make countries susceptible to disruptions in food production.<sup>63</sup> By reducing reliance on foreign imports, a country will have few alternatives in the case of crop failures, natural disasters, or other forms of consumption emergencies.<sup>64</sup> A drought could easily wipe out a country's food supply if significant protectionist policies have been implemented such that imports cannot be secured in time for a seamless transition from domestic to imported goods.<sup>65</sup> The difference in time for the transition may cause starvation in an entire country if long enough such that the recommended time for nutritional intake has been passed.<sup>66</sup>

Diplomatic effects also can occur from protectionist measures. Countries very likely will implement retaliatory tariffs, disrupting global supply chains due to the interconnectedness of modern trade systems.<sup>67</sup> And considering the partisan nature of geopolitics in the 21st century, it's very likely that it could escalate into sanctions and other incidents that are unproductive to world peace and collaboration.<sup>68</sup> With hindsight, most people can see that trade barriers can lead to war and other forms of conflict.

Supply chain disruption is yet another effect of protectionism for food.<sup>69</sup> In the modern world a simple cup of root beer needs nine ingredients from across the world: molasses from the United States, anise from Spain, licorice from France, vanilla from Madagascar, cinnamon from Sri Lanka, cloves from Indonesia, wintergreen from China, pimento berry oil from Jamaica, balsam oil from Peru.<sup>70</sup> Any one of these countries that have trade barriers placed upon these industries will cause massive disruptions to the industries of the other countries, and also cause a shortage in root beer world wide.<sup>71</sup> Root beer is just an example but it is a good representation of what sort of havoc protectionism can bring to a food market.<sup>72</sup>

Having covered the principles of the food market, below are a few case studies highlighting the effects of protectionism.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

## Case Study: Mexico's Reliance on the US

Mexico, as the direct neighbour to the United States, is heavily reliant on the US for manufacturing jobs, imports and exports, remittances, and foreign investment.<sup>74</sup>

The United States is Mexico's largest trading partner by a massive margin, as the US consists of 83% of Mexico's export revenue, and 45% of Mexico's imports.<sup>75</sup> Mexican trade to the US is facilitated by a long-standing trade relationship called NAFTA since 1994, later replaced in 2020 by the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, and Mexican industries have heavily profited from it.<sup>76</sup> NAFTA and its successor made most forms of trade between these three countries tariff free or low tariff.<sup>77</sup> Food products imported from the US consist of around 70% of all Mexican food imports.<sup>78</sup> With cheap and already processed foodstuffs entering Mexico directly consumable by the Mexican population, there is no need ever for Mexico to produce its own food (not that it can do so very well in the first place, as the harsh Mexican desert climate is unsuited to grow any staple crops such as grains or soy), and thus instead the Mexican economy satisfies itself on being the producer of cash crops and being the producer of American commodities.<sup>79</sup>

Mexican specialization in the cash crop and snack foods industry has allowed the US to divert its attention away from producing these things. Mexico has had the heavy burden of producing staple crops on their own, something which has hindered the Mexican food market and the wider populace for long periods of time.<sup>80</sup> The production of corn was the main sustenance of Mexican staple needs before the freeing of trade between Mexico and the US, as the production of wheat was only concentrated in a few portions of the countryside as once again the terrain was not suited for large scale production of staple foods other than corn.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> ILS Company, "What Food Does Mexico Export the Most? - The ILS Company," accessed September 27, 2023, <https://www.ilscompany.com/what-food-does-mexico-export/>.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

As all cheap labour had been sent to Mexico and all of the production of snack foods had been delegated to the southern plantations of Yucatan, NAFTA provided an opportunity for the three countries – Canada, Mexico, and the US – to trade goods in a way that allowed them to specialize in what they did best.<sup>82</sup> As seen by the USA's imports, Canada and Mexico each make up 14% of the US's total import spending. The specialization allowed for all three countries to maximize production efficiency in whatever their country was good at.<sup>83</sup>

All of this provided ample economic benefit, however this meant both Canada and Mexico were highly reliant on the US for import of foodstuffs, and if something had happened to the United States in an unpredictable way, there would have been no way for either country to have enough backup or alternative import countries to sustain itself while the US recoiled from its national emergency.<sup>84</sup> And this national emergency did arrive, in the form of Covid-19. Covid-19 caused a massive slump in the production of export commodities in the US and completely clogged up supply lines going to Mexico.<sup>85</sup> This meant that grain and other foodstuffs, which Mexico had depended on the US for, were no longer available.<sup>86</sup> What happened in the UK in early 2022 was a mirror of what happened in Mexico in 2020.<sup>87</sup> In 2020, 10.2 million Mexicans were living in a state of severe food insecurity, due to the import disruptions leaving supermarkets empty.<sup>88</sup> Processed foods were still readily available due to their long shelf life, and thus supermarkets could simply find older stock and sell them, however fresh foods and staple foods were nearly nowhere to be found.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> "Mexico Imports by Country," Trading Economics, accessed December 4, 2023, <https://tradingeconomics.com/mexico/imports-by-country>.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Dylan Campos, "How Covid-19 Is Impacting the Food System in Mexico," last modified March 27, 2020, <https://foodtank.com/news/2020/03/how-will-coronavirus-affect-our-food-a-dispatch-from-mexico/>.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

Food insecurity in Mexico during the pandemic could largely be attributed to an over-reliance on foreign imports of foodstuffs to allow for a greater quality of life during times of relative geo-political stability.<sup>90</sup> Of course, the imports of cheaper foreign foodstuffs allowed for Mexicans to enjoy cheap foods and foods not available for production domestically.<sup>91</sup> Had the Mexicans refused to specialize in cash crops and snack foods and instead produced wheat for domestic production, it would be likely that the Mexican economy at the time would be much lower than it was realistically, due to massive inefficiencies in said production.<sup>92</sup> However, the complete reliance on American imports of foodstuffs meant that any disruption in the supply chain to Mexico could lead to supermarkets being devoid of crucial foodstuffs necessary to keep people healthy, such as fruits, vegetables, and staple foods, and the disruption and consequences of such were shown clearly to the Mexican people during the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>93</sup>

These two case studies are showing two possibilities in international trade that have led to food crises in countries. First was the implementation of protectionist policy when domestic production could not have kept up, and second was the over-reliance on foreign imports for maximum specialization.<sup>94</sup> Delegates in the committee are instructed to find potential solutions for food crises in the world occurring due to mismanaged trade relations, with a few outlined below.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ellie Tragakes, "Economics for the IB Diploma," 3rd Edition (Cambridge University Press 2020).

## Potential Solution: Free Trade around the World

A potential solution would be a free-trade alliance around the world, where tariffs do not exist and everyone acts as if the entire world was one integrated market.<sup>95</sup> The non-existence of tariffs would allow for all countries to have densely integrated supply chains with many fail-safes in the case of any disruptions.<sup>96</sup>

In the case of a supply chain disruption, consumers can simply import tariff free from other countries that aren't affected by the supply disruption.<sup>97</sup> Naturally there will be effects in some industries but had there been more expanded supply chains, food supply around the world would not have been affected as much.

Take for example France. France relies on imports from China and Vietnam for grains and other forms of staple crop, something that they have long-standing trade agreements with China for.<sup>98</sup> Another country that makes equally good staple crops is the United States.<sup>99</sup> However, due to France's tariffs on the US, present for a variety of reasons, France buys all of its crops from Asia instead of the US.<sup>100</sup> This makes food cheaper in French supermarkets, making quality of life better in France, but also makes it particularly susceptible to disruption, say for example through the Suez Canal, through which all Asia-Europe trade flows.<sup>101</sup>

The proposed solution would have allowed France to diversify its imports, such as imports from South America or West Africa, making the effects of supply-line disruptions significantly less severe.<sup>102</sup> If the Suez Canal was ever down, the French could subsist on imports from West Africa and the Americas until the Suez Canal was reopened.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.



The issue with this proposed solution is that it would be highly detrimental to countries with varied export industries, none of which are particularly specialized, such as the UK or Czechia.<sup>104</sup> These countries would see their export industries completely vanish in the face of greater competition from mono-industrial countries, those with highly specialized export industries in specific sectors.<sup>105</sup> The differences between countries in terms of trade in this situation could lead to political tension between specialized exporter countries and varied export countries. These issues would have to be addressed.<sup>106</sup>

### Questions to Consider

- What does the Case Study of the UK tell us about the impact of economic measures such as protectionism on food insecurity?
- What has been the lasting impact of COVID-19 on food supply chains and food insecurity? How can we move toward a solution that would prevent such a shock from happening again?
- Is world-wide free trade possible? How would this impact food security, and work toward eliminating malnutrition worldwide?

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

## Topic 2: Malnutrition

### Subtopic 1: The Rise of Unhealthy Dietary Patterns in a World of Processed Food

The rise of processed food in the modern age can largely be attributed to a culture of “easiness in preparation, tasty in consumption”.<sup>107</sup> Ready-made burgers line the shelves of Costcos across America while canned soups are stocked full in European supermarkets.<sup>108</sup> Conversely, fresh vegetables are lacking in diets worldwide, and it wouldn’t be wrong to factor in the world food crisis outlined above as a reason for the lack of fresh foods in diets.<sup>109</sup> Despite the belief that developed nations are living nutritious lives and developing nations have a lack of nutrition due to poverty, that is hardly the case.<sup>110</sup> Developed nations have similar problems of income inequality and the same susceptibility to food crises as the Global South, and as such there will always be cases of malnutrition in countries.<sup>111</sup> The ways that malnutrition develops may be different depending on the aggregate economic condition of a country, but whether or not the country is developed, malnutrition will set in in the same way: with impoverished communities not having access to nutritious food due to economic reasons.<sup>112</sup>

In developed nations, it is mostly the ease of access to processed food that tends to dominate the reasons for malnutrition, along with the rising cost of fresh foods in the global inflation crisis.<sup>113</sup> It takes simply too much more money to make food at home from scratch than heating TV dinners or packaged foods. This is due to economies of scale applying in the case of packaged foods but rarely ever in the case of fresh foods.<sup>114</sup>

Packaged foods tend to have lower production costs due to the amount of preservatives in it and chemical flavouring instead of fresh flavouring.<sup>115</sup> This means that more can be produced using less, decreasing costs and also decreasing the amount of nutrients in the food.<sup>116</sup> There are also differences in calorie intakes of processed foods and fresh foods in many cases, due to trans fat being present in many products in large amounts. We shall take spam and use it as an example.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ellie Tragakes, “Economics for the IB Diploma,” 3rd Edition (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

## Case Study: The Pitfalls of Tinned Spam

Tinned spam, a processed meat product that has been popular for decades and known for its universal applications from sandwiches to hot pots, has found its place in pantries around the world.<sup>118</sup> Naturally, as with all processed foods, the contents of spam have made it into some sort of a culinary conundrum. Spam, which stands for 'Special Processed American Meat' (though some claim it to be a contraction of 'spiced ham'), is essentially a blend of pork shoulder, ham, sodium nitrite, water, modified potato starch, sugar, and salt.<sup>119</sup> But, as with an overly complex gear system, the devil lies in the detail. The sodium content in Spam is rather alarming. A single serving, which is about 2 ounces or 56 grams, contains 790 milligrams of sodium.<sup>120</sup> That's roughly a third of the recommended daily intake for a healthy adult, which is fairly certain consuming too much of this can lead to high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke.<sup>121</sup> Then there's the matter of sodium nitrite, a preservative used to extend the shelf life of processed meats and give them that appealing pinkish hue.<sup>122</sup> While it's not inherently bad in small amounts, consuming it in larger quantities has been linked to an increased risk of certain types of cancer.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, the saturated fat content in Spam is also cause for concern. Each serving packs almost 6 grams of saturated fat, which is about 29% of the daily recommended limit.<sup>124</sup> As we all know, excessive intake of saturated fats can raise the level of cholesterol in your blood, leading to heart problems. Now, one can understand the allure of convenience.<sup>125</sup> It's not designed for that. It's designed to be 'convenient', and in many cases, that convenience comes at a cost.<sup>126</sup>

The benefit of processed foods is the convenience, and of course, the cost. Rarely ever is cheap food also nutritious and this definitely isn't the case. The nutritional crisis in the developed world has been caused by the increasingly cost-effective and health-destroying processed foods that have been marketed to impoverished communities as a cheap and convenient alternative to fresh foods.<sup>127</sup> Those with a lower income also tend to not have a choice in buying or not due to the cost-of-living crisis that is making fresh foods simply not enough for basic consumption.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> "Ham, Sliced, Pre-Packaged, Deli Meat (96% Fat Free, Water Added)," Food Data, last modified April 1, 2019, <https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/fdc-app.html#/food-details/332397/nutrients>.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ellie Tragakes, "Economics for the IB Diploma," 3rd Edition (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

## Subtopic 2: Malnutrition in the Developing World

The importance of the connection between corruption, exploitation, and the dire consequences they bestow upon malnutrition needs to be stated.<sup>129</sup> Funds designated for agricultural development, food security, and nutrition programs are often diverted into the pockets of unscrupulous individuals.<sup>130</sup> This act leaves communities devoid of the necessary foods for nutritional balance.<sup>131</sup> In the realm of agriculture this casts a dark shadow on sustainable food practices.<sup>132</sup> Smallholder farmers, the most common type of farmer in developing nations, often bear the brunt of unfair practices.<sup>133</sup> Middlemen (like Nestlé,) and corrupt officials seize the opportunity to manipulate prices, leaving farmers with meager profits for their hard work, and even less for those on the receiving end of products.<sup>134</sup> This vicious cycle perpetuates malnutrition as prices are high due to manipulation and at times corrupt officials will simply seize food products as “tax”.<sup>135</sup>

Middlemen and exploitation are also an issue for the Global South. The Nestlé incident in the 1970s and 80s is a great example of foreign meddling in developing nations for pure monetary exploitation in arguably devilish ways.<sup>136</sup> In the 1970s, Nestlé faced significant controversy and criticism regarding its marketing exploitation for baby formula in the Global South.<sup>137</sup> During this period, Nestlé aggressively promoted its infant formula products in low-income countries, targeting mothers who often lacked access to clean water, proper sanitation, and adequate healthcare facilities.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

One of the key issues surrounding Nestlé's marketing was the promotion of formula as a substitute for breastfeeding, despite scientific evidence and recommendations from organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) endorsing exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a child's life.<sup>139</sup> Nestlé's marketing campaigns emphasized the perceived benefits of formula feeding and downplayed the importance of breastfeeding, leading to a decline in breastfeeding rates in many developing nations' communities.<sup>140</sup>

Nestlé's questionable marketing tactics included the distribution of free formula samples, direct advertising to mothers, and the use of persuasive tactics to influence healthcare professionals.<sup>141</sup> By providing free samples, Nestlé aimed to create dependency on their products, making it difficult for mothers to switch back to breastfeeding even if they faced financial constraints.<sup>142</sup> Additionally, the company's marketing practices often failed to provide clear and accurate instructions on how to prepare formulas safely, which posed risks in areas with limited access to clean water or proper sterilization equipment.<sup>143</sup>

The consequences of Nestlé's marketing practices were severe. Many families in developing nations, who were already struggling with poverty and limited resources, found it challenging to afford the expensive formula or maintain proper hygiene while preparing it.<sup>144</sup> As a result, infants were at a higher risk of malnutrition, infections, and diseases, leading to health complications and, tragically and unexpectedly, even deaths.<sup>145</sup>

The Global South's issue is mainly that corruption by local officials cause communities to be devoid of correctly-priced-and-available fresh foods, while foreign corporations attempt to dismantle the health of nations to further their profit-maximizing goals.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Jill Krasny, "Every Parent Should Know the Scandalous History of Infant Formula," Business Insider, June 25, 2012, <https://www.businessinsider.com/nestles-infant-formula-scandal-2012-6>

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

## Potential Solution: Regulatory Practices for Corporations and Government Ministers

It is ever so relevant that corporations with strong market power need accountability for their actions. Multinational corporations' operations span across the globe, and with some nations having tatty regulations on corporate activity, it is easy to find the people of these nations heavily exploited by unscrupulous businessmen and corrupt politicians.<sup>147</sup> It is therefore the case that regulatory practices in terms of transparency and power limits are necessary for these individuals and organizations.<sup>148</sup>

Firstly, transparency is ensured by having multinational corporations send full copies of operation plans to NGOs such as the UN or IMF.<sup>149</sup> They will then be checked for discrepancies in terms of worker safety and exploitation. Representatives of these NGOs would then inspect the areas of operation to ensure that standards are met and that they have not been swindled by a misleading report.<sup>150</sup>

Secondly, governments must implement anti-corruption campaigns, limiting “financial exchanges” and “favours”, and possibly “lobbying” as well.<sup>151</sup> When politicians and corporations use their power to influence the market in their favour, it is only the people that suffer.<sup>152</sup> This is the case in all nations, when corporations have political power it creates massive profit margins for the corporations while making sure that the less fortunate simply must cope with their losses.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ellie Tragakes, “Economics for the IB Diploma,” 3rd Edition (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.



## Questions to Consider:

- How does the rise of processed food impact the food crisis and malnutrition, both in the Global North and the Global South?
- How have large companies with operations in the Global South impacted nutrition in the area, and what can be done to ensure equal food access?

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