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Migration, Development and EU Free Trade Deals: The Paradox of Economic Partnership Agreements as a Push Factor for Migration

MARK LANGAN^a, SOPHIA PRICE^b

European and International Studies, King's College London, London WC2B 6LE^a

Politics and International Relations, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, LS1 3HE, UK^b

mark.langan@kcl.ac.uk , sophia.price@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Abstract

The article problematises the EU's approach to trade, development and migration (TD&M) in the context of Africa-EU relations and the push for free trade deals under Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). According to EU policymakers there is harmony between trade policies, development goals and migration objectives. EU officials state that EPAs are a development friendly tool for job creation in Africa, and this in turn will address the 'root causes of irregular migration' between the continents. There is significant cause for concern, however, relating to the negative consequences of EPAs for jobs in the continent, particularly in labour intensive import-competing agricultural sectors. Free trade deals may therefore stimulate migration from Africa to Europe. This apparent paradox is underscored by recent fieldwork conducted in Ghana's poultry sector which highlights business stakeholders' deep concerns about EPAs stoking unemployment and migration.

Keywords: trade, development, migration, EU, Africa, EPAs

Introduction

The European Union (EU) and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries have a long history of trade and aid relations dating back to 1957 when then colonies became ‘associated’ with the European project. In 2021, Africa-EU relations are in a moment of transition as they move beyond the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement (2000-2021) into a new phase of co-operation. At the heart of the current relationship are debates about how best to marry trade and economic ties to pro-poor outcomes conducive to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this context, there is deep scepticism among African states about whether the EU’s free trade deals – Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) – due to come onstream in Africa’s regional economic communities (RECs) – are conducive to poverty alleviation (see for instance Krapohl & Van Huut, 2020). African trade justice campaigners express particular fears about the prospects of EU dumping of cheap agricultural produce such as frozen poultry under EPAs, and its consequences for livelihoods in poorer rural communities (FairPlay 2017; Karodia 2017). In addition, African states remain deeply sceptical about the EU’s tying of aid monies to ever more stringent controls and mitigations surrounding irregular migration (Langan & Price, 2020, p.712). The establishment of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa in 2015, for example, has led to concern that resources originally meant for poverty alleviation are being diverted to policing borders and preventing irregular migration, irrespective of development prerogatives (De Guerry et al., 2018, p.6).

To date, much of the literature on EU trade and development policies has avoided explicit examination of the likely links between the EPAs and migration outcomes (see Kohnert 2007a and 2007b as notable exceptions). This seems a serious omission particularly since the EU regularly cites the need to create jobs in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) as a means of dealing with ‘the root causes of poverty and irregular migration’ (Chadwick, 2017).

Notably, the European External Investment Plan (EEIP) established in 2017 and the 2018 Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs demonstrate the EU's apparent concern for economic wellbeing and better livelihoods in African countries to deal with the 'push' factors behind migration (ibid). In this context, it seems odd that the impact of EPAs – for instance upon labour intensive import competing agricultural sectors – is not being examined more closely in terms of likely consequences for irregular migration.

The article addresses this lacuna in this area of research. Focusing on the case study of the poultry industry in Ghana, it argues that free trade deals may act as push factors for migration from Africa to Europe. The choice of empirical focus is important given Ghana's signing of an interim EPA in 2016 and the position of poultry as a 'cause celebre' sector affected by import flooding. By engaging poultry farmers and civil society stakeholders in Ghana, the article provides key interviews with local actors on the ground, therein offering a much needed 'local' perspective to traditional debates on donor-recipient relationships. This grounded case study therefore provides an important contribution to the literature on aid and free trade agreements by focusing on the overlooked aspect of their relation to irregular migration.

The discussion is structured as follows. The first section considers the existing scholarly literature on the tripartite relationship between trade, development and migration (TD&M). It underscores donor focus upon free trade as a mechanism to reduce migration in the (Post) Washington Consensus. The second section examines the EU's approach to TD&M in its recent relations with sub-Saharan African countries and its focus on tackling 'the root causes of irregular migration'. The third section explores EPAs, with an empirical focus on EU-West Africa trade arrangements. It highlights the plight of import-competing agricultural and manufacturing sectors in the region, drawing on fieldwork interviews with

poultry farmers in Ghana. Business narratives underscore deep concerns regarding the link between the Ghana-EU interim EPA, job losses and heightened migration flows.¹ The article concludes by considering the successor agreement to Cotonou and how the Africa-EU partnership ought to evolve to better reconcile tensions between TD&M inherent in the EU's free market approach to development.

Donor Approaches to TD&M in the (Post) Washington Consensus

The relationship between development and migration has become increasingly politicised in the era of the (Post) Washington Consensus amidst entrenchment of free market approaches to poverty reduction (see Fine & Saad-Filho, 2014; Onis & Senses, 2005). Western donors, most notably the USA and the EU, have increasingly articulated a securitised and exclusionary discourse concerning the potential threat of irregular migration to their domestic populations. This has been spurred by geopolitical events such as 9/11, the Madrid train bombing in 2002 and the 'war on terror', combined with austerity-based responses to the global financial crisis, which have galvanized resentment against 'the other' (Schöfberger, 2019, p.522). This has emboldened far-right populist movements whose rhetoric encouraged centrist politicians to toughen their own policy stance on migration, particularly from less well-off neighbouring countries (Glick Schiller, 2009, p.15).

In this context, Western donors seeking a 'solution' to the migration question have placed increasing focus on the need to provide jobs and employment in developing countries, whether in Latin America or in the African continent for the USA and EU respectively (Gamso & Yuldashev, 2018; Castillejo, 2017; Carbaugh, 2007; Papademetriou, 2004;

¹ Informed consent was gained with all participants through thorough explanation of the purpose of the research and the potential anonymised use of quotations for scholarly publications. University of Leicester ethics clearance ref no: 9092; University of Newcastle ref no: 17018/2018

Widgren and Martin, 2002; Martin & Straubhaar, 2002; Martin, 2001; Tapinos, 2000). Drawing on the logic of the Post-Washington Consensus – which seeks to ‘make globalisation work for the poor’ via a Third Way balance between markets and society – donor emphasis has been placed on the capacity for free trade to drive economic growth, boost employment and ‘stay at home development’ (Ahmed 2000). This logic determines that through open access to American and European consumers, developing countries’ export industries will be able to boost production and therein provide employment. Development will be underpinned by free trade regimes, which in turn will lower the numbers of migrants coming from now-more-prosperous developing nations. As Carbaugh (2007, p.1) explains, donors maintain that as “workers’ employment opportunities and incomes improve at home... workers will be less motivated to migrate.”

Of course, this is not a novel approach. The US Congress hoped that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) would create export opportunities in ‘maquiladoras’ that in turn would provide jobs for Mexican workers who otherwise would attempt irregular migration to the US (Martin, 2001, p.205). Donor institutions such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and centre-left/centre-right politicians such as Presidents Clinton and Sarkozy have similarly articulated the need for free trade frameworks to stimulate job creation in developing countries (De Haas, 2007; Van Criekinge, 2009; Uchitelle, 2007).

In order to boost the capacity of free trade agreements to relieve the ‘migration problem’, they have been combined with aid provision. Aid funds have been allocated to i) improve border management controls within developing countries, ii) bolster productive sectors via Aid for Trade initiatives and iii) to encourage and underpin repatriation schemes and enhanced domestic surveillance via aid conditionalities. Importantly, however, the focus

on trade also reflects a degree of donor scepticism about the efficacy and value of aid provision itself. As Haas (2007, p.831) usefully explains in relation to Western donors' strategies: "confronted with the often disappointing realities of aid policies, and corresponding with the general neoclassical turn in development thinking... [trade] has gained popularity as a perceived means to... reduce migration."

Focus on trade policy also reflects political difficulties within donor countries themselves when using aid monies to limit migration from sending countries. The allocation of aid resources in this way has provoked controversies, not least in the European Parliament, about the (mis)use of aid to further the self-interests of aid-givers (Benko, 2020, pp. 3-4; Knoll & de Weijer, 2016, pp.19-20; Martens et al., 2020, p.210). It has also led to concerns about violations of recipient state sovereignty, especially in instances where aid conditionality has been linked to the forcible repatriation of a nation's citizens from a donor country, or for domestic policy change towards a harsher environment involving population surveillance and the prevention of migratory attempts (Dennison et al., 2019; Langan, 2018, pp.149-155; Reslow, 2010, p.5). Dealing with the 'root causes of migration' in the Post-Washington Consensus framework therefore requires donors' use of trade and aid mechanisms *in tandem* to reduce migration.

Moreover, a discursive focus on positive stories of free trade promoting jobs and investment helps donors communicate how development policies could produce 'win-win' outcomes for aid-giver (with lower overall migration) and aid-recipient (with better employment opportunities, particularly for their youth). Knoll and de Weijer (2016, p.7) explain that donors have embraced a core narrative in which migration is understood as a direct cause of poverty. Trade interventions to reduce poverty via job creation and foreign investment are therefore seen as part of a 'development' solution to the problem of

migration. By increasing jobs through free trade agreements, donor countries also believe that they will also be more successful in persuading developing countries to also give consent to repatriation schemes. Namely, since persons being repatriated from Europe or the US will, in this free trade vision of development, be more likely to be able to find employment upon return to their country of origin (c.f. Adam et al., 2020, p.3110).

It is important to recognise, however, that Western donors' understanding of the links **between development and migration** sits uneasily with the views of many African governments, as well highlighting the paradox in the policy positions of key global governance bodies such as the World Bank (see Lavenex & Kunz, 2008, pp.441-443). Donor focus on development as a 'cure' for migration overlooks the importance of migration for stimulating economic development in the country of origin (ibid), particularly in terms of remittances. A recent study by the Ghanaian government and the UN International Organisation for Migration (IOM) found that 26% of households in the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions benefitted from monies sent by family members abroad. Each household in receipt of remittances gained an average of Ghanaian Cedi (GHS) 4,663 per annum – then equivalent to around USD \$1,069. This meant that total household income almost doubled for the beneficiaries in question (Republic of Ghana, 2017, p.51; IOM, 2017).

Donor assumptions about development and migration also jar with studies which point to how development can spur migration. This 'migration hump' can emerge as economic growth gets underway in developing countries (see for instance de Haas, 2007; de Haas, 2010; Knoll & de Weijer, 2016; Martin, 2006; Olesen, 2002). In the short to medium term, migration flows may increase as sending countries enjoy economic 'take-off'. Kirwin & Anderson (2018) provide a useful overview of how migration rises in lockstep with economic development as citizens with growing incomes become increasingly able to

migrate. Migration eventually declines once per capita income reach sufficiently high levels as to discourage the need for migration (estimated in 2018 at around \$7000 – \$8000) (ibid). In addition, donor focus on lack of economic opportunities as the key driver for migration omits recognition of a multitude of other factors. Kohnert (2007, p.19), for instance, notes the EU’s own complicity in supporting corrupt and oppressive regimes in Africa; whose mal-governance then leads to state insecurity, civil strife, and broader political discontent - thus stimulating migration. This is corroborated by Kirwen & Andersen (2018, p.6) who frame these as the “survival factors” which stimulate greater migratory flows.

Academic studies also demonstrate that donor focus upon migration as an inter-continental phenomenon simplifies the nuanced realities of population movements. West Africa is particularly relevant here since it is largely viewed by EU officials as the ‘cradle’ of migration from the continent (Kohnert, 2007b, p.18). Studies show, however, that while there has been discursive focus on West African migration to Europe, migration rates are ten times higher between the West African countries themselves (Charrière & Frésia, 2017, p.48). With the exception of refugee flows, West African intra-regional migration is driven by rational economic factors – including family strategies to diversify risk through use of intra-regional commercial networks (ibid, p.2; Martin et al., 2002, p.3109). Nevertheless, despite donors’ oversimplistic assumptions surrounding the relationship between development and migration, the narrative of free trade deals spurring job growth and economic development - and thus limiting migration - has gained significant traction, not least in the context of Africa-EU ties. The next section underscores how this understanding of TD&M has taken root in EU approaches to African states (as part of the wider ACP bloc). This foregrounds consideration of how EPAs in fact may spur migration, contrary to EU narratives on TD&M.

Europe's approach to TD&M in its relations with African states

The EU has actively intervened to tackle irregular migration flows from Africa. EU aid monies have been used to enhance sending countries' border controls, **to promote economic growth (via Aid for Trade)**, and to incentivise local elites' acquiescence to stringent migration **policies via aid conditionality** (including implementation of repatriation schemes) (see CONCORD, 2015; European Parliament, 2016; Mohamed, 2016). The Barcelona Declaration signed in 1995 between the EU and North African governments **brought these three key usages of aid to the fore** (de Haas, 2007, pp.826-827). Coinciding with this, EU negotiations with SSA countries for the Cotonou Agreement in the late 1990s included keen discussions about the need for joint ACP-EU efforts to stem irregular migration (Crush, 2015, p.47). The provision for ACP-EU co-operation on repatriation was subsequently included in the Cotonou Agreement via its controversial Article 13 which states that:

each of the ACP States shall accept the return of and readmission of any of its nationals who are illegally present on the territory of a Member State of the European Union, at that Member State's request and without further formalities' (ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement 2014 [2000], p.31).

This proved a contentious issue in the recent negotiations for the new EU/ACP Partnership Agreement, with some return and readmission principles remaining unsettled (Ishmael, 2021, p.17; Carbone, 2021, p.250). However, the new agreement, initialled in April 2021, includes a commitment to a "balanced approach to migration, so as to reap the benefits of safe, orderly and regular migration and mobility, stem irregular migration while addressing its root causes" (European Commission, 2021a, p.9). It makes an explicit link between 'well-managed migration' and sustainable development (ibid, p.51), and in emphasising the

distinction between ‘regular’ and ‘irregular migration’ links the latter to ‘humanitarian and security challenges’ (ibid, p.53).

Throughout the lifetime of Cotonou, and now into the post-Cotonou era, EU officials have emphasised the need to curb migration from the African continent, framing this as a security issue affecting EU citizenries (Ishmael, 2021; Zanker, 2019, p.8; CONCORD, 2015). Perhaps most memorably in terms of Europe’s securitisation rhetoric, then President Sarkozy of France lamented in 2007 that:

At our doorstep, 900 million African represent the youth of the world. Four hundred fifty million of them are under seventeen years old. Their poverty and lack of a future are their problem today. Tomorrow these problems will be ours... No European country will be able to stand up to this challenge if Africans continue to believe that their economic salvation lies in Europe... We need to speak frankly with Africans about immigration (cited in Hansen & Jonsson, 2011, p.265).

Sarkozy’s remarks reflected certain EU member states’ domestic political pressures – in the French context, the rise of Marine Le Pen and her anti-immigration Front National. His remarks closely followed on from the establishment of the Euro-African Dialogue on Migration (the Rabat Process) in 2006, which aimed to prevent illegal migration and to link migration policies to development and trade agendas (Charrière & Frésia, 2017, p.23). The Rabat Process required both departure and transition countries in SSA and the Maghreb to prevent migration, to readmit expelled migrants, and to facilitate long-term repatriation through rehabilitation programmes (ibid). From 2008 onwards, it also gave rise to a series of Euro-African Ministerial Conferences on Migration and Development, which saw EU aid monies being increasingly tied to the management of migration (ibid).

More recently in the timeframe of the UN SDGs, the Africa-EU Valletta Action Plan agreed in 2015 – and latterly updated in Addis Ababa in 2018 – set out the EU’s clear ambition to promote sustainable development and jobs in Africa as a means of stemming migration (Schöfberger, 2019). In the same year as the Valletta Summit, the EU also established its Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (Zaun & Nantermoz, 2021). This was followed shortly by the European External Investment Plan (2017) and the Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs (2018). In the post-2015 period, in the context of the renewed SDG commitments, the ‘Migration Crisis’ and the rise of far-right populism in European member states, it has therefore been increasingly apparent that the EU is tying aid delivery to efforts to tackle the ‘root causes of irregular migration’ (Adam et al., 2020; Zanker, 2019; Knoll & de Weijer, 2016).

It is also important to note that while EU rhetoric focuses upon migration as a security concern, it has been eager to encourage migration of high-skilled labour from ACP countries. For instance, the EPA signed between the EU and Caribbean states in 2008 included extensive mobility provisions aimed at highly educated and skilled migrants such as doctors and nurses. The EU’s securitised rhetoric therefore enables the ‘picking and choosing’ of the most desirable segments of the labour force while constructing lesser skilled migrants as a security threat (Jurje & Lavenex, 2014, p.330). This both encourages a brain drain while promulgating a false securitised rhetoric of the threat posed by low-skilled migration (ibid).

The EU’s articulation of the relationship between TD&M can therefore be viewed as highly problematic on a number of levels, not least its simplified understanding of the connection between economic growth and migration. What is equally problematic, however, is the relative lack of EU – and scholarly – attention to the likely impact of the EU’s free trade deals in SSA for migration. Given the EU’s emphasis on economic growth and job

creation as a means to promote prosperity and forestall irregular migration, it seems a peculiar omission that the EPAs have not been scrutinised in this way. Accordingly, this article now contextualises the EPAs before considering their likely consequences for job intensive import-competing sectors.

The paradox of Africa-EU free trade deals

The EPAs – initiated under the Cotonou Agreement (2000-2021) – have sought to bind sub-regions within the ACP bloc to the EU via free trade frameworks. Only the Caribbean region signed an EPA by the original deadline of December 2007. This owed to vociferous civil society and African government criticisms of the likely impact of premature liberalisation and import flooding upon domestic manufacturers and agro-processors (Langan, 2018). In other regions, including West Africa, regional economic communities (RECs) remain divided on the question of the EPA, with some states such as Ghana initiating unilateral EPAs with the EU as their REC (ECOWAS) has not ratified a full regional deal.

Difficulties in concluding the West African EPA reflects concerns over the impact of trade liberalisation, particularly in job intensive import competing agricultural sectors. Existing studies of likely EPA impacts point to agricultural retraction. The Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) on the terms of a West African EPA found that it would have a major impact upon sensitive agricultural sectors in terms of import flooding. Import surges upon EPA tariff liberalisation were anticipated to reach up to 16% for onions, 15% for potatoes, 16% for beef, and 18% for poultry in the region (cited in Patel, 2007, p.20). This is significant not least for the fact that agriculture accounts for over 50% of employment within West Africa, as confirmed by a recent economic survey by the African Development Bank (2018, p.13).

The connection between agricultural dislocation and irregular migration has been explored within the wider literature on TD&M (see for example Sharma, 2015; Raman, 2004; Martin, 2006; Martin & Straubhaar, 2002; Martin, 2001). Economic hardship, especially in rural hinterlands, encourages the unemployed (particularly young men) to undertake often perilous journeys in search of livelihoods and prosperity. Sharma (2015, p.7), in a wide-ranging survey of the impact of trade liberalisation upon rural communities in the Global South found a clear connection between import flooding (after trade liberalisation) and rural-urban migration. Significantly for Africa-EU migration, these intra-country movements from rural areas to urban cities can in turn drive international and inter-continental migration (Raman, 2004, p.23). The likelihood of EPAs exacerbating rural-urban migration, and latterly inter-continental migration, should not be underestimated.

The EU has attempted to offset concerns about the impact of EPAs, by suggesting that agricultural commodities may be included within a sensitive goods basket, removed from EPA liberalisation commitments undertaken across the wider economy. However, as explained by an NGO umbrella organisation, the sensitive goods basket is not in itself sufficient and is subject to exceptions (for instance agricultural goods ostensibly destined for processing in ACP countries):

The EU of course accepts that the main agricultural products be included in the list of sensitive products and thus excluded from liberalisation. However... we can observe that, in the agreement with West Africa, many products of an agricultural origin intended for processing industries of ACP countries are indeed subject to liberalisation. The ACP countries would also not be able to set up possible export restrictions in the future, even though these are authorised by the WTO and were used by the EU for cereals from 1995 to 1997” (Coordination Sud, 2014, p.2).

Nwoke (2009, p.10), meanwhile, explains that the sensitive goods basket can only cover up to 20% of total tariff lines. This is despite the fact that around 60% of agricultural goods require protection in West Africa. The scope of the basket is thus wholly insufficient to protect agricultural production, let alone to safeguard production in non-agricultural sectors of the economy (ibid). The limitations of the sensitive goods basket also mean that unprocessed agricultural commodities are prioritised for inclusion at the expense of processed agri-foods – and of course manufacturing industries. Such sectors thus excluded from the sensitive goods basket will experience the full unbridled effects of EPA tariff liberalisation. This will have severe consequences. A study of Benin, for example, published by the United Nations Commission for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) found that the textiles sector, ‘other modern industries’ sector and agri-foods would experience significant production falls under an EPA and predicted a reduction in Benin’s total gross domestic product (GDP) of 3.01% (Soulé 2013, p.198).

The interim EPA signed with Ghana illustrates how premature trade liberalisation can undermine agricultural livelihoods. It includes a standstill clause which means that the Ghanaian government may not increase existing tariffs on sensitive agricultural sectors even if they are contained within the sensitive goods basket (see ActionAid. 2013, p.4; European Commission, 2017, Article 15). Despite local producers’ complaints about import flooding of cheap European foodstuffs, the Ghanaian government is unable to raise tariffs on sensitive goods beyond the current tariff rate of 35%. This is despite the fact that this relatively modest tariff rate (when compared to possible WTO tariff ceilings) is deemed wholly insufficient by agricultural producers in sectors such as poultry. Producers have pointed out that EU goods (in this case, frozen meat) have been regularly dumped below production costs (Johnson, 2011). In addition, local farmers cannot compete with EU production subsidies, even with the imposition of a relatively modest 35% tariff.

The existence of safeguard clauses within the Ghana-EU interim EPA in terms of anti-dumping and counter-vailing measures (to both prevent dumping and to counteract subsidies respectively) is of little practical comfort to Ghanaian farmers and processors. The experience of the EU – South Africa Development Community (SADC) EPA demonstrates that the EU will vigorously contest any attempted application of anti-dumping or safeguard measures (namely higher tariffs or import quotas) against commodities originating from EU member states. Southern African partners have pleaded with the European Commission to recognise the devastating impact of frozen poultry meat dumped upon regional markets in terms of lost local livelihoods. Since their concerns were not heeded, SADC countries have sought to impose higher tariffs, citing the theoretical provision of anti-dumping and countervailing measures in their EPA (EPA Monitoring 2019). The EU’s hostile reaction and legal contestation to this SADC move bodes ill for any similar Ghanaian attempt to take on the European Commission in a trade law dispute.

Concerns about EPA impacts upon agricultural employment are corroborated, meanwhile, by Ghana’s historical experience. Bagooro (2011, pp.9-13) illustrated how earlier bouts of tariff liberalisation negatively impacted the local poultry sector, as import surges from EU member states led to the collapse of local businesses. Low tariffs were estimated to have cost Ghana at least 490,000 jobs in poultry which could have been created in the presence of protectionist policies (Sumberg et al.,2013, p.8).

The lessons of trade liberalisation through the imposition of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) provide an important point of reference for the predictions of the impact of the EPAs. The EU Directorate General (DG) for Agriculture found that SAPs and consequent trade liberalisation undertaken in SSA in the 1990s benefited European imports to the region. Poultry imports rose by 113% between 1995 and 2004, while the value of

European cereals entering Africa rose by 182% (cited in Goodison, 2007, p.291). Similarly, ActionAid (2004, p.16) highlighted the plight of West African tomato farmers, where around 3 million jobs are estimated to have been lost in Ghana alone due to historical trade liberalisation. Trade justice campaigners contextualise the imposition of free trade policies in the region against the backdrop of the EU's own Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) which subsidises European tomato production by around €300 million per annum (ibid).

The 'development' potential of extensive trade liberalisation through the EPA process are further brought into question by other EU trade policy mechanisms and agreements. Many least developed countries (LDCs) in Africa already have zero tariff access to the EU market due to provisions of the Everything But Arms (EBA) arrangement.² Furthermore, strict EU non-tariff barriers (NTBs) relating to hygiene, sanitation and pest control often inhibit African exporters from gaining entry to European markets. For African states, therefore, benefits of EPA trade liberalisation would only accrue to a limited number of export sectors able to satisfy strict EU regulations (such as South African beef producers). EPAs therefore offer little additional to LDC countries. or indeed small-scale farmers

Against this backdrop, a series of interviews with poultry farmers and civil society officials in Ghana underscored fears about current free trade agendas. **Forty-three interviews were held from 2017-2020 in the immediate years following Ghana's ratification of an interim EPA with the EU in 2016 to assess local perspectives on the free trade arrangements.** The poultry sector was chosen due to its status as a 'cause célèbre' with possible links to migration in terms of regional import flooding (see APRODEV et al., 2017), its priority status in numerous government economic strategies, as well as its politicisation in disputes

² EBA is a trade arrangement which aims to assist exporters in least developed countries by 'removing tariffs and quotas for all imports of [goods](#) (except arms and ammunition), coming into the EU'. Developing countries which 'graduate' to middle income developing country status, such as Ghana or Kenya, however, do not qualify. For more information see European Commission (2021b).

between the two main political parties (see Ministry of Food & Agriculture, 2018; Krow, 2019)³. Ghana, meanwhile, was chosen as a middle-income West African developing country that had recently agreed to an interim EPA, and had historically aligned to EU policy preferences on trade matters (Langan and Price 2015).

Across the interviews, farmers and officials warned that Ghana's interim EPA would exacerbate migratory pressures. Business stakeholders expressed the belief that the EU – by pushing for premature free trade deals – would limit opportunities for domestic producers and thus heighten unemployment levels (especially among young men who will then seek prosperity outside of rural hinterlands). Farmers expressed their view that the collapse of poultry farms under the historical weight of import flooding from EU member states and beyond, had already increased rural-urban migration within Ghana. They explained that many young people then used their time in the cities to accumulate sufficient income to fund migratory attempts to Europe. One poultry sector stakeholder stated that:

We have to sit down with the EU and tell them most of our problems [about trade]. The young ones have no jobs and now they are taking those kinds of risks with migration.... you have to meet us halfway and help us protect our businesses and your own citizens.... if you want Africans to stay in Africa (Interview A 3.4.17).

Another poultry farmer corroborated this point. He contextualised it in terms of a 'success story' farmer who had then experienced hardship under import flooding of frozen poultry meat. He explained the direct consequences in terms of migration:

³ Anonymity was granted to participants owing to the business sensitive nature of discussions, as well as to facilitate free and frank discussion of government and donor policies.

One of my friends did some course... they are happy... they are keeping 4,000 birds... it was one of the success stories. And then the Europeans take the market from him. We should be making jobs and supporting families. And then we would never have to travel on the [Mediterranean] sea. It causes harm when you are not comfortable in your countries [migration happens]. You have deprived them of jobs [the migrants]' (Interview a 5.4. 17).

This stark perspective was confirmed by another poultry farmer who expressed his frustrations that Europe complained about African migration and yet ruined livelihoods and thus drove migration through insistence upon free trade arrangements:

It is creating mayhem for Europe [migration]. Why don't you just leave us? You don't want to see us in Europe so why cause all these problems? It's the result of what they are doing to us..... Leave Africa to develop, because we can develop. ... If local industries supported the people they would not be interested in going to Libya, the sea and into Europe... Europe will be the losers in the end. There will be no end to that migration. The people will come if you don't leave them to develop' (Interview b 5.4.17).

The theme of EU trade policies being a prime cause of migration from Ghana (and West Africa) to Europe was expressed by another poultry farmer. He explained that imports had drastically reduced domestic farmers' market share since the 1990s:

It was in the 90s when we noted importation had started. It was escalating, escalating. And now what is produced in the country is not even 5% [of the local market]. It is 2% what we produce in the country.... It is killing jobs and so obviously people find all means to enter Europe... we should be promoting job opportunities... jobs provide security. If people lose their jobs, what do you

expect them to do? ... food security and job creation is part of it [dealing with migration] (Interview 6.4.17).

Another poultry farmer expressed his view that although an outright import ban was not practical, external trade partners bringing frozen meat into Ghana had a responsibility to assist local farmers to produce and thus alleviate poverty. If the EU failed to do this then migration would be the natural outcome:

Why is the EU not helping poultry?... They should help to develop the poultry industry in developing countries and create jobs for them... then migration will be limited or else come dump [cheap goods] and destroy them... the amount of people moving to Europe and the US will come down if you have poultry employ a lot of the youth... you can bring the [imported] product but at the same time help local industry, and create jobs for youth to prevent movement to Europe (Interview 7.4.17).

Another poultry farmer concurred and pointed to the need for donor assistance to improve processing capacity in sectors such as poultry, as a means of stemming migration flows if the problem of imports was simultaneously dealt with:

They are not importing the whole chicken... it's the parts, the wings and the thighs, that Americans and Europeans don't like... it's the wings and thighs at a very low price. All the jobs have been collapsing. There are no opportunities here. That's why they want to go to your country [unemployed workers].... If you bring young people into agriculture then immigration goes down, when people have structural problems at home [they migrate]...Africa has been a raw material hub for Europe and America, so they should be able to help us

establish African processing... it would solve the migration problem
(Interview 10.4.17).

Such views were echoed by a Ghanaian civil society stakeholder who explained that the EU needed to address the disconnect surrounding the impact of its trade policies in relation to its simultaneous attempts to limit African migration flows:

When there are poor economic conditions people move most often from Africa to Europe..... Trade policy is supposed to generate jobs... the ultimate object should be meaningful decent jobs for the people.... but this means that there is some disconnect because this is not really the object of the EU trade agreement. It calls into question then their African pact. People migrate because of lack of economic opportunities (21.1.20).

This view was repeated in even starker terms by a trade unionist in Ghana who stated that the EU was in a state of denial about the impact of its free trade policies upon African migration. He contextualised this in terms of a conversation he had had with a returnee who had worked illegally in Italy:

A lady approached me, she had been in southern Italy and had come back. She was Ghanaian. Some of them are working illegally in Italy in the tomato fields. They already had experience of tomato production in Ghana but they had lost their businesses. And so lots of them find themselves in the tomato fields in Italy. The EU is in a state of denial. They will not publicly acknowledge that the migrant crisis is linked to their own policies... they will tell you it's about corruption and failure of governance, but their own policies never came up as an explanation (23.1.20).

These perspectives in the Ghanaian poultry sector clearly represent a challenge to EU perspectives on TD&M Africa. They point to the pressures of a low tariff model locked-in under the interim EPA and the standstill clause in the case of poultry, and underscore the impact of lost livelihoods for migratory patterns to Europe. Indeed, poultry farmers warn EU policy makers that their strategic goal to limit migration from Africa will be in vain unless they provide a suitably favourable trade relationship that allows some protection for vulnerable agricultural sectors. They query why EU officials who view African migration as a security risk are simultaneously willing to exacerbate migration by denying livelihoods to youth in poorer rural hinterlands. They explain that sectors such as poultry are potentially job intensive and would do much to stem the tide of migration if farmers were able to produce without the damaging impact of cheap frozen meat.

The stakeholder perspectives point to the paradox within the EU's approach. There is agreement that support for building key sectors would bring employment and reduce migratory pressures, however the impact of unfettered trade liberalisation will cause economic retraction and intensify irregular migration. Given the likely negative consequences of the EPAs in terms job losses in core agricultural sectors – as well as infant industries unprotected by sensitive goods baskets – the EU's free trade agenda therefore threatens to exacerbate rural-urban migration, leading in turn to more irregular migration to the EU. Given the Economic Commission's and EU member states' priorities in relation to reducing levels of African migration to Europe, it would seem important to reconsider tariff liberalisation embedded in the current generation of EPAs in SSA.

In sum, the EU's free trade agenda is an ill fit with the EU's objectives to deal with the 'root causes of migration' from Africa. An openness to non-reciprocal trade terms and a trade policy reflective of the needs and concerns of African stakeholders would be more

attuned to dealing with irregular migration from Africa. This would require EU political will and a paradigm shift in both EU and WTO rationales away from current free market orthodoxy in the (Post) Washington Consensus.

Conclusion

The EU's free market vision of a 'win-win' partnership with African countries is clear in its approach to TD&M in the continent. Development and trade policies have become tools in the EU's attempts to stem irregular migration, which is framed as a risk to the security of Europe. Article 13 of the Cotonou agreement had called for EU-ACP cooperation to combat 'illegal' migration. Under pressure from public opinion inflamed by the radical right, the EU has promised to use aid money to tackle the 'root causes of migration' by sponsoring initiatives such as the Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs. This has been combined with the EU's ongoing commitment to a free trade agenda, particularly via EPAs, which ostensibly will lead to job creation in African countries, forestalling migration. Trade and aid have thus become twin mechanisms in the EU's approach to dealing with migration.

This article, however, has pointed to the paradox inherent within the EU's perspective on TD&M. Rather than dealing with the 'root causes of migration' by creating jobs, EPAs pose a real threat to job intensive, import-competing sectors. This is borne out by historical evidence, for example, in terms of Ghana's earlier experiences of liberalisation. It is also underscored by business stakeholder interviews in the Ghanaian poultry sector. Poultry farmers warn that the EU's trade policies are not commensurate with its desire to limit migration from Africa. On the contrary, job losses in sectors such as poultry stimulate rural-urban migration within African countries, followed by migratory attempts to reach

Europe. The threat to jobs will not be limited to the agricultural sector but are likely to be felt in other areas of African economies, particularly nascent manufacturing industries.

EPAs appear incommensurate with the EU's declared intent to alleviate poverty, and its attempts to minimise domestic pressures for migration. Alternative approaches could reconsider the reciprocal trade terms of the current EPA deals, as well as the limitations of the various 'sensitive goods baskets'. Although the new post-Cotonou Treaty presents an opportunity for such a revision, outcomes in relation to TD&M point to continuity rather than change. The new post-Cotonou period of Africa-EU relations are likely to be characterised by continuing controversies surrounding irregular migration and its links to development, as premature free trade arrangements act as a 'push factor' for increased migration flows from developing countries, such as Ghana, to the EU. In this context, it remains imperative for scholars to study EU trade and aid policies in Africa in a grounded fashion that engages businesses and civil society organisations to better comprehend the real impacts of donor agendas. Fieldwork engagement, as demonstrated in this article, can enhance understandings of the relationship between TD&M to challenge donors' simplistic narratives of 'pro-poor' and 'win-win' trade and development ties with former colonies.

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