

Research and Technical Cooperation using GTAP Model and Database in Africa

Introduction

The Economic Commission for Africa, in the year under review made progress in the technical cooperation elements of the application of the GTAP database and model. This progress was made possible by the taking-off of the second phase of the African Trade Policy Centre¹ (ATPC) which is supported by CIDA of Canada. The second phase of the ATPC is focusing on institutional development within the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa. In this regard, three RECs have been identified as the initial beneficiary of the technical cooperation support. These are: East African Community (EAC), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), and the Economic Community for Western Africa States (ECOWAS). The ATPC is helping set up and strengthen Trade Policy Units in the Secretariats of these African integration institutions.

GTAP Related Activities

1. As part of setting up the TPUs in the RECs, UNECA's ATPC undertook programming missions to assess the needs of the RECs. In the programming missions, each of the RECs emphasized the desire to be provided with technical support in the area of policy analysis, and they all pointed out the need to have access and knowledge of trade policy analysis tools such as GTAP. It is due to this demand that the ECA through the ATPC will be procuring for each of the RECs access to GTAP database, the necessary hardware and start training arrangements for the RECs Secretariats officials and researchers from each of the RECs partner states. The procurement process is at an advanced stage. Once the TPUs are fully in place, the ECA will be revisiting its interest through the ATPC to host the Annual Short Course in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia so that many of the RECs staff and the researchers from their partner states can be sponsored to undergo the training.
2. One of the key issues in Africa's trade agenda is how to deal with the rationalization of the multiple and overlapping RECs. At the political level, some important decisions have been made on the way forward. As a result, three of the RECs covering the Eastern and Southern Africa have formed a tripartite with the objective of harmonizing their trade policies and

¹ Please visit <http://www.uneca.org/atpc> for more details and activities of the African Trade Policy Centre since its inception in 2003 and the areas of focus in its second phase. The membership of the ECA in the GTAP Board since our joining has been made possible by the ATPC.

coordinating their trade-related infrastructure. As a key partner in the continent's integration process, the ECA has started undertaking technical work to inform the tripartite on how and what it means to rationalize in the different areas e.g. in policies. The GTAP database, especially, the African database became the logical starting point for this research and a paper looking at this COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite FTA² will be presented at the 12th Global Economic Analysis Conference.

3. The ECA is also partnering with the WTO to revisit the Doha Round modalities simulations in order to appreciate what they mean for Africa. The paper, which looks at the draft Doha modalities of December 2009 is currently under preparation and will be discussed by African experts in September 2009 in Nairobi, Kenya. The ATPC will be sponsoring the participation of the African Group in Geneva and the ECA hopes to identify and invite experts within the GTAP family to provide their inputs to the Nairobi meeting.

² The paper looking at the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite can be downloaded from the 12th Annual Global Economic Analysis Conference website through the uploaded programme at the GTAP Website.