

Trade Sanction's Contribution to Food Insecurity

Trade Sanction's Role in Agri-trade and Food Security

Economic sanctions that affect trade and finance can cause severe economic destabilization with impacts on the livelihoods and well-being of populations in affected countries ([NIH](#)). These sanctions can hinder the import and export of agricultural products, thereby affecting the availability of food. Given that food insecurity can be mitigated by the international trade of agricultural products, a highly globalized agricultural trade system is critical to global food security. Countries facing food insecurity have simultaneously experienced long periods of international sanctions. Although most sanctions are designed to avoid targeting health outcomes and often provide explicit humanitarian, medical, and food exceptions, most sanctions have failed and have had secondary effects on international agricultural trade ([ScienceDirect](#)).

Case Studies for Sanction's Impact on Food Security

In the present day, there are many cases whereby it is observed that the U.S. places sanctions on a country and it negatively impacts their access to sufficient food supply.

Iran

Economic sanctions imposed on Iran targeting its oil market have restricted Iran's ability to engage in international trade, including the importation of food and agricultural products. Financial restrictions have made it difficult for Iran to pay for food imports, leading to shortages and increased prices for essential goods.

According to a report from the International Journal of Health Policy and Management ([IJHPM](#)), the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions in 2018 led to a sharp increase in food prices, with some items experiencing inflation rates of over 100%. This has made it difficult for many Iranians to afford basic food items, exacerbating food insecurity in the country.

Cuba

The U.S. has maintained a trade embargo on Cuba for several decades, significantly restricting economic activities between the two countries. In 2018, the United Nations estimated that U.S. trade restrictions had cost Cuba more than \$130 billion since the embargo began. This embargo has had a substantial impact on Cuba's food security. Specifically, it has limited Cuba's access to food imports and agricultural equipment, leading to periodic food shortages and higher prices for basic goods ([CFR](#)).

Cuba imports approximately 80% of its food, and the embargo has complicated these imports by imposing restrictions that affect the quantity and quality of food products available. These restrictions also hinder the import of agricultural equipment, which is crucial for domestic food production. The embargo's limitations on financial transactions further exacerbate the situation by making it difficult for Cuba to pay for food imports, leading to delays and increased costs ([CFR](#)).

Conclusion

Food security and agricultural sustainability associated with hunger, nutrition and health from 1950 to 2019 were significantly associated with international sanctions ([ScienceDirect](#)).

While the intent of sanctions is often to pressure governments into policy changes, they can inadvertently harm the general population, leading to increased food insecurity ([NIH](#)).

Key takeaway

Executive and Legislative forces that impose sanctions must take humanitarian exceptions and mechanisms into consideration to ensure food can reach those in need.