

# Life in a Glasshouse: Disentangling Agricultural Globalization from Injustice

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ACADEMIC PAPER

**ABSTRACT:** Economics is not a topic that many would immediately associate with bioethics research. Certainly the impact of humanitarian work by governments and international organizations on issues like food scarcity, water access, agricultural flourishing, and disaster relief each intersect the social sciences, public policy, and bioethical evaluation. But equally important are matters of trade theory and economic equilibrium. Especially in agricultural cultivation, policy frameworks affect growth trajectories across nations and shuffle the economic distribution of benefits and burdens for billions of people. In light of the discipline's significant impact on international affairs and institutional goals that in turn affect individuals' biological flourishing, economic thought deserves the utmost scrutiny through the lens of ethical critique.

My paper, "Life in a Glasshouse: Disentangling Agricultural Globalization from Injustice," looks at how comparative advantage theory informs commodity cash crop specialization, which presents a moral dilemma for farmers in developing countries. Commodity reliance inequitably burdens these states' agrarian populations with systematic risk, as their crops can make or break its export volume and consequently its GDP. This and the agricultural sector's ability (or lack thereof) to foster capital innovation have implications for the long-term institutional strength of developing states. These disadvantageous circumstances - which can manifest in economic and institutional instability at atomistic and aggregate levels - are morally impermissible when evaluated through a human rights framework. But the international institutions that have enabled this shift towards reckless trade also have the capacity to offer dynamic solutions to this economic inequity.

My hope is that this paper gives readers a new perspective on the ways in which international trade, development, and policy organizations are subject to scrutiny through a bioethical framework in the pursuit of global justice.

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