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Most Favored Nation Tariffs and U.S. Agricultural Trade

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Abstract

Using tariff data from the World Trade Organization (WTO), this report compares most favored nation (MFN) applied and bound tariff rates between the United States and more than 150 WTO trading partners for agricultural goods, focusing on comparisons across 10 different commodity groups. Results indicate that the United States imposes lower average agricultural MFN tariffs than more than 90 percent of trading partners. We observe significant levels of variation in agricultural MFN import tariffs across different commodity groups and trading partners. At the commodity level, the largest differences are in live animals and meat; beverages and tobacco; fruits and vegetables; coffee, tea, cocoa, and spices; and cereals and food preparations. Within a commodity group there are significant differences in regional and country-level tariff rates; however, trade agreements may provide a mechanism to improve market access for U.S. exporters. This analysis of MFN rates does not take trade agreements or preferential tariff policies into account; nor does it analyze the prevalence of nontariff measures, which can also represent large barriers to agricultural trade.

Keywords: tariffs, most favored nation (MFN), U.S. exports, commodity analysis, international agricultural trade

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Most Favored Nation Tariffs and U.S. Agricultural Trade

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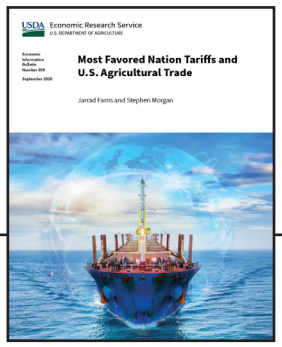


Key Points

- This report compares most favored nation (MFN) average applied and bound tariffs across agricultural commodity groups between the United States and its foreign trading partners.
- Global simple average MFN applied tariffs are 8.1 percent across all traded products; however, the average MFN applied tariff on agricultural goods is 13.4 percent compared to 7.2 percent on nonagricultural products.
- The United States imposes lower average MFN applied tariff rates on agricultural goods than more than 90 percent of countries.
- U.S. agricultural exporters across all 10 examined agricultural commodity groups face higher MFN applied tariffs that provide them with less market access, on average, relative to foreign exporters seeking to sell to the U.S. market.
- For half of the agricultural commodity groups examined, U.S. exporters face average MFN applied tariffs that are approximately 10 percentage points higher than the U.S. MFN applied tariff rate.
- At the commodity level, the largest differences in average MFN applied tariffs are in live animals and meat; beverages and tobacco; fruits and vegetables; coffee, tea, cocoa, and spices; and cereals and food preparations. The smallest average differences are in cotton, silk, and wool; oilseeds, fats, and oils; and sugars and confectionery products.

Why Does This Matter?

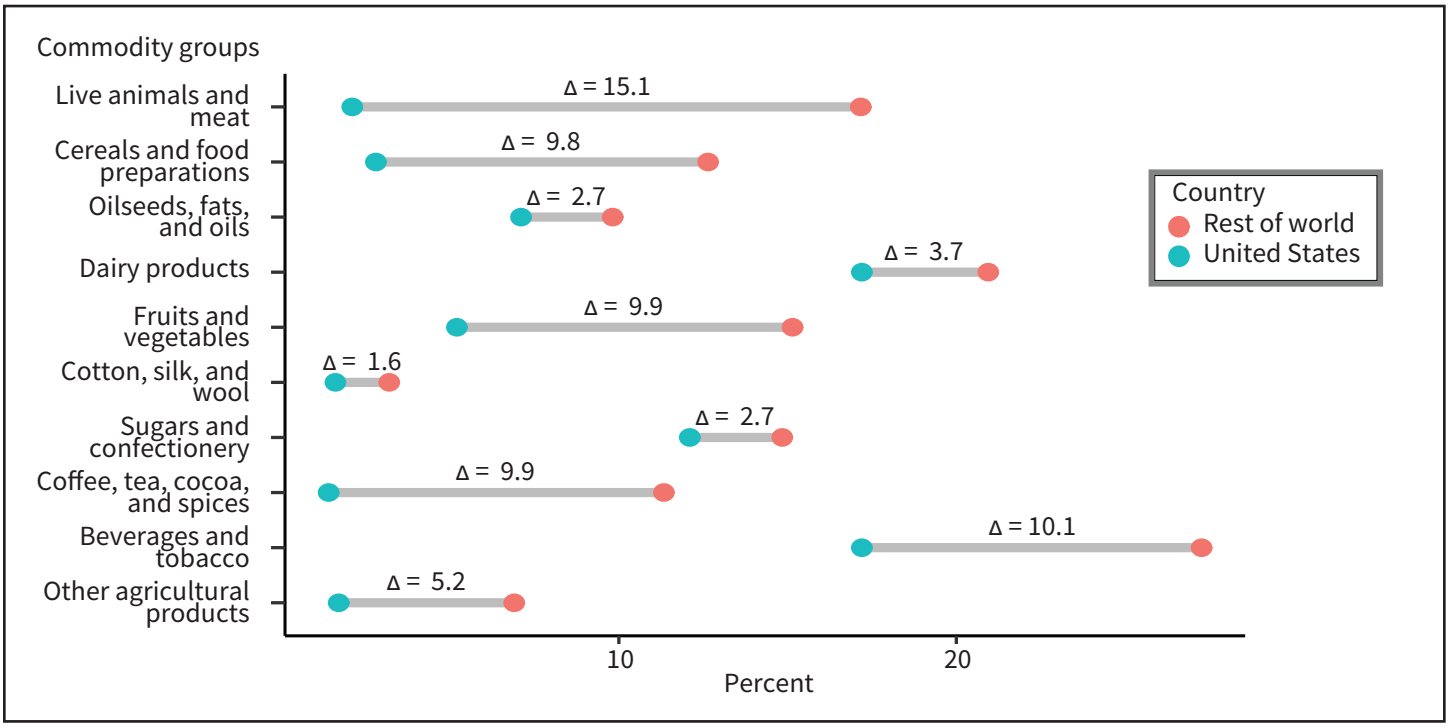
Tariffs are a tool used by countries to protect domestic producers from foreign competition, to raise revenue, and to negotiate new economic and non-economic agreements. This report compares agricultural tariff rates by analyzing whether foreign trading partners enact the same or similar average MFN applied or bound tariff rates on agricultural commodity groups as the United States. This report reveals new insights on the differences—across countries and commodity groups—in MFN tariffs faced by U.S. exporters relative to those faced by foreign exporters to the United States.

A Few More Details

This report draws on tariff data from the 2025 release of publicly available WTO tariff profiles. It compares MFN

tariff rates between the United States and more than 150 WTO trading partners for agricultural goods, focusing on comparisons across 10 different commodity groups. Specifically, this report analyzes two different tariff rates, MFN applied and bound rates. The MFN applied rate is the actual tariff rate used for a given commodity in the most recent trade data. MFN applied tariff rates can be lowered by preferential trade agreements but otherwise apply to all WTO trading partners. The bound rate is the maximum MFN applied rate that a country can charge for a given commodity under its WTO commitments. This analysis of MFN rates does not take trade agreements or preferential tariff policies into account; nor does it analyze the prevalence of nontariff measures, which can also represent large barriers to agricultural trade.

Comparing U.S. and trading partner average most favored nation (MFN) applied import tariffs by commodity



Δ = Represents the percentage point difference in the average tariff rate between the United States and the rest of the world.

Note: Calculations do not take into account any existing trade agreements or preferential tariff policies.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service calculations using data from 2025 World Trade Organization tariff profiles.

Most Favored Nation Tariffs and U.S. Agricultural Trade

Introduction

Tariffs are a tool used by countries to negotiate new economic and non-economic agreements, as well as to protect domestic producers from foreign competition and to raise revenue. Despite more than half a century of global efforts to reduce tariffs through multilateral agreements, agricultural tariffs have remained significantly higher than nonagricultural tariffs for most countries (Gibson et al., 2001).[1] Focusing on global average most favored nation (MFN) applied tariffs, the rates applied to agricultural trade (13.4 percent) are approximately 6.2 percentage points higher than the rates applied to nonagricultural goods (7.2 percent) (World Trade Organization (WTO) et al., 2025). This discrepancy highlights the fact that agricultural exporters often face higher barriers to trade, and therefore less market access, compared to exporters in other industries.

This report investigates these higher barriers to trade by comparing MFN agricultural tariffs between the United States and its global trading partners. This analysis of MFN rates does not take trade agreements or preferential tariff policies into account; nor does it analyze the prevalence of nontariff measures, which can also represent large barriers to agricultural trade. While there is significant literature focusing on overall agricultural tariff rates, there is less analysis of comparative differences in tariffs faced by exporters of different commodity groups.[2] This report draws upon publicly available information from the 2025 release of the WTO tariff profiles covering agricultural and nonagricultural goods for more than 150 countries (WTO et al., 2025).[3] By comparing MFN tariffs, this report provides a uniform framework for quantifying the tariff imbalance that the United States faces for agriculture. In the case where the U.S. agricultural MFN tariff is lower than that of a trading partner, domestic exporters may face more limited market access than their foreign counterparts in the absence of a bilateral trade agreement.

Specifically, this report analyzes two different tariff rates—most favored nation (MFN) applied rates and bound rates—for 10 different agricultural commodity groups. The MFN applied rate is the actual tariff rate used for a given commodity in the most recent trade data. MFN applied tariff rates can be lowered by preferential trade agreements but otherwise apply to all WTO trading partners. The bound rate is the maximum MFN applied rate a country can charge for a given tariff line under its WTO commitments. In practice, the MFN applied rate is often significantly lower than the bound rate for agricultural products.[4] By negotiating high bound rates and keeping MFN applied rates well below

[1] While average tariff rates for both agricultural and nonagricultural products have trended downward since the World Trade Organization (WTO) tariff profiles were first published in 2006, the gap between agricultural and nonagricultural tariffs has been persistent (Drevinskas et al., 2023)

[2] One exception is Gibson et al. (2001), which analyzes tariff profiles and tariff rate quotas for a range of agricultural products by country and region. Other studies have also looked at the economic implications of global agricultural tariffs in different modeling contexts (Beckman, 2021; Anderson et al., 2023).

[3] Reported tariff rates in this release typically reflect WTO members' MFN tariffs in 2024.

[4] While MFN applied rates may be less than the bound rate, a combination of other trade actions and nontariff measures may cause a country to effectively exceed the bound rate for a given commodity (Beckman et al., 2025).

bound rates, a country maintains more flexibility to adjust its MFN rates upwards within its WTO commitments. One example of these differences can be seen in the tariffs Turkey applies to shelled almonds. Turkey's bound rate for this product is 43.2 percent and it adjusted its MFN rate from 2 percent to 15 percent in 2023 (Beckman et al., 2025). When a country exceeds its bound rate, a trading partner can use the WTO's dispute settlement process to challenge the trade action.

Historical Background on Global Agricultural Tariffs

Following the end of World War II, there were significant international efforts to reorganize global trade and market access through multilateral negotiations and agreements (see box, Barriers to Agricultural Trade). This process started with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and was signed by 23 countries, including the United States, in 1947. GATT had a stated goal of "entering into reciprocal and mutually advantageous arrangements directed to the substantial reduction of tariffs and other barriers to trade" (GATT, 1947).

Barriers to Agricultural Trade

There are generally three main barriers to agricultural trade flows: tariffs, tariff rate quotas, and nontariff measures.

Tariffs are a custom duty which Governments apply to imports. When implemented, tariffs raise the price of foreign imports relative to domestically produced goods which reduces demand for foreign imports (Gibson et al., 2001). Tariffs can be applied ad valorem (i.e., as a percentage of the value of the import), as a specific tariff (i.e., a fixed amount), or some combination of the two.

Another type of barrier is called a tariff rate quota (TRQ), which applies different tariff rates to imports based on the quantity imported. Generally, a TRQ allows a specific quantity of imports at a low tariff level and after that quota is filled imposes a relatively high tariff rate on any additional imports (Beckman et al., 2021).

Nontariff measures (NTMs) are all measures other than ordinary customs tariffs that may affect the value and volume of international trade. While there are several different types of NTMs, there are two main types that affect agricultural trade (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2020):

- Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures: Standards applied to international trade flows to ensure food safety and protect human, animal, or plant life or health.
- Technical barriers to trade (TBTs): Regulations, standards, and procedures that define the characteristics a product should have to enter a specific market.

NTMs can be a barrier to trade by imposing high compliance costs on exporters or even by restricting the entry of exports into a market. At the same time, some types of NTMs can facilitate trade when they harmonize standards or provide demand-enhancing information to consumers (Farris et al., 2024).

Supporting the idea of mutual market access, GATT was organized under the principle of most favored nation (MFN) treatment, which means that countries agree to apply the same tariff and nontariff treatment to all other trading partners in the arrangement equally. For example, this means that if a

country applies a 10 percent tariff to poultry imports, that same tariff should be applied to poultry imports from all trading partners, except in limited circumstances.[5] The first round of GATT negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland resulted in a weighted average tariff reduction of 26 percent, focusing on nonagricultural goods (Bown & Irwin, 2016). Additional agreements were reached to lower tariffs throughout eight rounds of negotiations, spanning 1947 through 1994.

Agriculture was largely excluded from GATT negotiations until the Uruguay Round (1986–94) due to concerns related to national food security. However, in the Uruguay Round, countries agreed to establish the World Trade Organization (WTO) to replace GATT. A key part of the negotiations within WTO was the Agreement on Agriculture, which established frameworks for trade liberalization including domestic support, market access, and export subsidies. This agreement resulted in the conversion of many agricultural nontariff barriers into bound tariffs and the establishment of tariff rate quotas (TRQs) to provide guaranteed minimum levels of import access. Developed countries agreed to reduce agricultural tariffs by an average of 36 percent with minimum reductions per tariff line of 15 percent, while developing countries were subject to an average reduction of 24 percent with minimum reductions of 10 percent (Wainio et al., 2001). WTO tariff commitments focused on achieving average reductions across agricultural tariff lines; mutual market access did not mean that members matched tariff rates on a product-by-product basis. However, following the Uruguay Round, by 2006 simple average agricultural MFN tariffs were 16.1 percent and remained significantly higher than nonagricultural tariffs which averaged 9.2 percent (WTO et al., 2006; Drevinskas et al., 2023). Recent research has assessed that agricultural tariffs remain a significant barrier to trade and estimates the removal of all agricultural tariffs may increase global trade values by 11 percent (Beckman, 2021).

Comparing Global Agricultural MFN Tariff Rates

Tariff rates vary by both trading partner and traded goods. Table 1 presents global average MFN tariff rates for agriculture, nonagriculture, and total traded products. Overall, we find that for all measures used, MFN tariffs on agricultural products are significantly higher than those for nonagricultural goods. Simple average MFN tariffs are 8.1 percent across all traded products; however, the average tariff on agricultural goods is 13.4 percent compared to 7.2 percent on nonagricultural products (table 1). This difference is reflective of the higher barriers to trade agricultural exporters face compared with exporters in the manufacturing sector. Weighting tariffs by the value of import flows results in an even larger average difference between agricultural and nonagricultural goods; however, we note that average weighted tariffs are substantially similar to the simple average (see box, Measuring Average Tariff Rates).

[5] Some exceptions to MFN treatment include establishing free trade agreements, regional trade blocs, customs unions, addressing unfair competition, or providing market access to developing countries.

Table 1
Global average tariff rates

Measure	Average tariff rate (percent)		
	Agriculture	Nonagriculture	Total
Trade-weighted average MFN applied	13.6	5.6	6.5
Simple average MFN applied	13.4	7.2	8.1
Simple average final bound	47.0	24.9	32.5

MFN = most favored nation.

Note: Trade weights are by Harmonized System six-digit (HS6) level import value shares.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using 2025 World Trade Organization tariff profile data.

Table 1 also highlights the large difference in average final bound tariff rates between different types of exports. The average bound tariffs on agricultural products for all WTO members is 47.0 percent compared with 24.9 percent for nonagricultural goods. Countries have more flexibility within their WTO commitments to set higher tariffs on agricultural than nonagricultural products.

Measuring Average Tariff Rates

Calculating average tariff rates is difficult due to the complex set of circumstances in which tariffs are applied across different products. Because of these challenges, researchers and practitioners must make decisions about how to aggregate and compare tariffs across products and countries. There are two primary ways to calculate average tariff rates: trade-weighted averages and simple averages.

Trade-weighted average tariffs take a weighted average of the tariffs that a country imposes, where the weights are given by the country's import shares for the products affected by each tariff line. The import shares used when trade weighting may be calculated in several different ways, such as by import value or volume. The World Trade Organization (WTO) tariff profiles first calculate a simple average of duties across individual products within each Harmonized System six-digit (HS6) level category.[1] The trade-weighted statistic is then calculated as a weighted average of these HS6 level aggregations where the weights are given by the HS6 level import value shares (WTO et al., 2006; 2025). When weighting by import value shares in this way, tariffs on higher value imports are weighted more heavily than those on lower value imports (WTO et al., 2006).

By adjusting the average tariff measurement by observed trade flows, trade weighting reflects the tariff burdens experienced by current exporters under existing policy. However, this method does not account for trade that does not occur due to tariffs or other trade-reducing policies. For example, if a country imposes a very high tariff on a particular product, and as a result rarely imports that product, then that high tariff line would receive a low weight in the country's trade-weighted average despite having a large impact on trade flows.

Since trade weighting may underweight tariffs which lead to large reductions in trade flows, another common method of tariff aggregation is to calculate a simple average of tariff rates. As in the trade-weighted averages, the WTO tariff profiles first average duties across the tariff line level to the HS6 level. The simple average statistic is then calculated as an average of these HS6 level aggregations, where each HS6 subheading is given an equal weight (WTO et al., 2006; 2025).

[1] The Harmonized System (HS) is a structured nomenclature for international goods trade (World Customs Organization (WCO), 2018).

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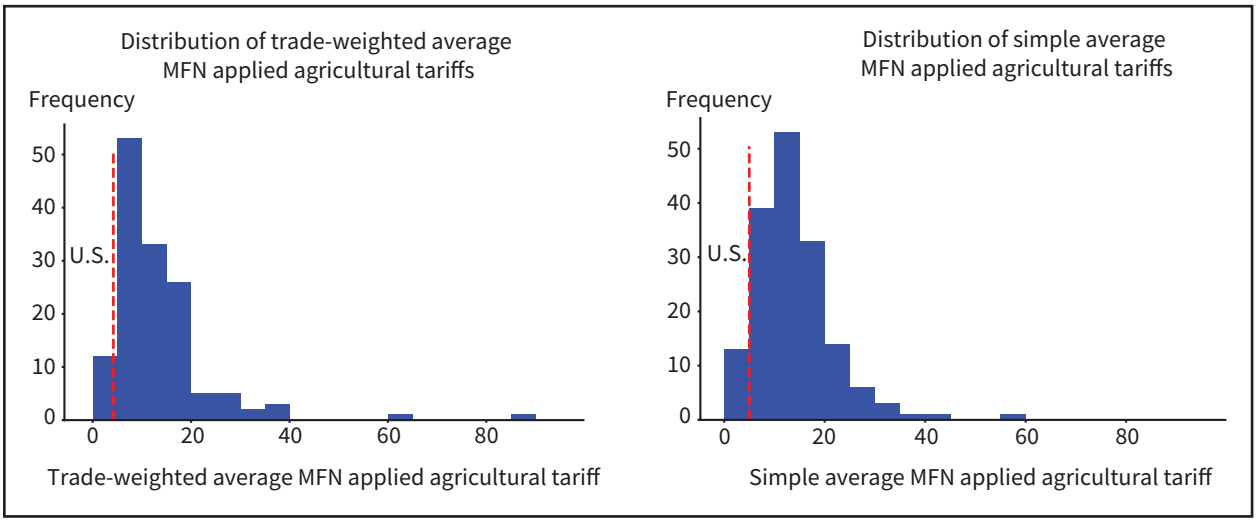
Compared to a trade-weighted average, a simple average can be a better reflection of current reported tariff rates and eases cross-country comparisons due to being unaffected by differences in import mixes across countries. However, since simple averages give all tariffs equal weight, they do not necessarily reflect the actual tariff burden imposed on exporters based on current trade flows.

Another challenge to understanding average tariff levels is the calculation of ad valorem equivalents (AVEs) for duties that are applied in non-ad valorem (NAV) terms. For example, where ad valorem duties are a percentage of the value of the imported product, NAV duties may be expressed as an amount per unit imported, may include some maximum or minimum value, or may be based on some additional technical factors (WTO et al., 2006). Where possible, the WTO tariff profiles convert non-ad valorem duties to AVEs for inclusion in the averages; however, the way these AVEs are estimated can also lead to different results (WTO et al., 2006; 2025).

Drawing on the available WTO tariff profile data, this report analyzes both trade-weighted and simple average measures for understanding overall agricultural tariffs. For analyzing tariffs by commodity group, we use the simple average tariffs as reported by the WTO, as trade-weighted statistics are not available at the commodity level.

Of particular interest is understanding how individual WTO members' MFN applied agricultural tariffs differ from that of the United States. Figure 1 plots the global distribution of trade-weighted and simple average MFN applied agricultural tariff rates across all WTO members with available data (table A.1). The dotted vertical line in figure 1 highlights the United States' average MFN applied agricultural tariff, which is 4.2 percent on a trade-weighted basis and 5 percent using the simple average. This further illustrates most foreign countries' higher MFN applied agricultural tariffs relative to the United States. Absent bilateral trade agreements, U.S. agricultural producers tend to face higher MFN tariffs when exporting their products to other countries than foreign agricultural producers face when exporting their products to the United States.

Figure 1
Distribution of global average most favored nation (MFN) applied agricultural tariffs



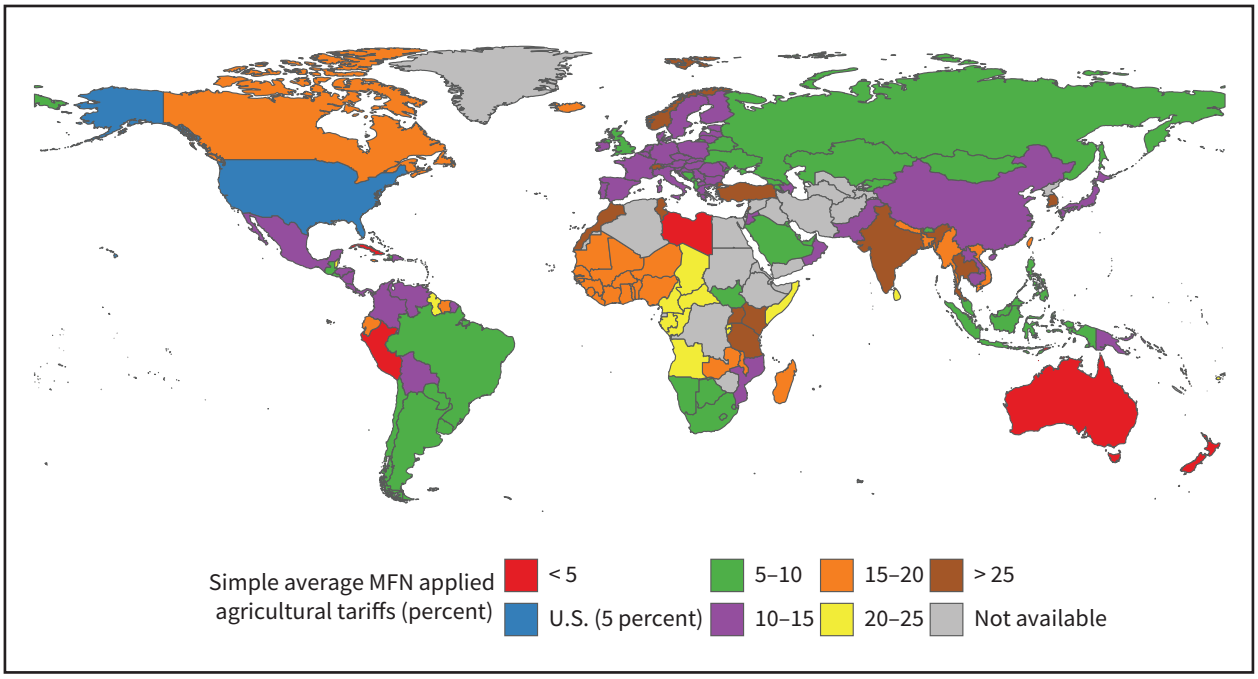
Note: Trade-weighted (left panel) and simple (right panel) average agricultural tariffs, as reported by the World Trade Organization. Trade weights are by HS6 level import value shares. Calculations do not take into account any existing trade agreements or preferential tariff policies.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service calculations using data from 2025 World Trade Organization tariff profiles.

The U.S. average MFN applied agricultural tariff is in the far-left tail of the distribution for both average tariff measurements (figure 1). That is, more than 90 percent of foreign countries impose higher average MFN applied tariffs on their agricultural imports than that of the United States. Focusing on the trade-weighted average, the most common average MFN applied agricultural tariff is around 9 percent, more than double that of the U.S. rate; primarily due to European Union (EU) countries having a common external tariff policy with a trade-weighted MFN average of 8.7 percent. Moreover, seven countries have trade-weighted average MFN applied agricultural tariffs of more than 30 percent: South Korea (89.6 percent), India (64.3 percent), Belize (39.6 percent), Tanzania (37.7 percent), Thailand (35.8 percent), Kenya (34.5 percent), and Burundi (30.3 percent).[6]

In addition to examining the distribution of average agricultural tariffs, mapping these rates provides another view of the geographic variation relative to the United States. Figure 2 maps the simple average MFN applied agricultural tariffs for all WTO members with available data. This reveals significant within-region heterogeneity in agricultural tariffs. For example, in Asia we see that China's average agricultural tariff is at least double and India's is more than five times higher than the United States.

Figure 2
Global average agricultural most favored nation (MFN) applied tariffs



Note: Simple average MFN applied agricultural tariffs, as reported by the World Trade Organization. Calculations do not take into account any existing trade agreements or preferential tariff policies. Unbound tariff lines are excluded from averages.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service calculations using data from 2025 World Trade Organization tariff profiles.

This report also considers tariffs for some of the largest markets for U.S. agricultural trade. One important collection of trading partners is the members of the Group of 20 (G20), an international forum for economic cooperation. Table 2 ranks G20 member countries by their trade-weighted average MFN applied agricultural tariff rate and shows that South Korea, India, and Turkey have the highest average agricultural tariff rates among these large markets. At the same time, the United States has some of the lowest average agricultural tariffs among the G20, with only Australia having a lower average tariff rate.

[6] This ranking excludes WTO members that do not report trade-weighted statistics due to missing or incomplete trade data.

Table 2

Ranking Group of 20 (G20) member states by average agricultural most favored nation (MFN) rates

Country	Trade-weighted MFN applied (percent)	Simple average MFN applied (percent)	2025 U.S. agricultural trade flows (billion U.S. dollars)		
			Exports	Imports	Trade surplus
South Korea	89.6	57	9.78	1.92	7.87
India	64.3	36.7	2.91	3.55	-0.64
Turkey	21.3	40.9	2.01	2.08	-0.07
Canada	14.7	15.1	28.21	39.31	-11.10
China	13.8	14	8.37	4.28	4.09
United Kingdom	12.9	8.8	2.24	2.43	-0.19
Japan	11.6	11.9	12.81	1.22	11.58
Brazil	11.1	9	0.94	8.33	-7.39
Mexico	10.8	11.4	30.62	44.01	-13.39
South Africa	9.6	8.3	0.30	0.57	-0.26
Argentina	9.4	9.5	0.17	2.03	-1.87
Russia	8.9	9.7	0.07	0.09	-0.02
Saudi Arabia	8.8	7.1	1.28	0.02	1.26
France	8.7	10.5	0.65	6.41	-5.75
Germany	8.7	10.5	2.52	2.57	-0.05
Italy	8.7	10.5	1.77	8.27	-6.50
Indonesia	5.8	8.6	2.76	5.24	-2.48
United States	4.2	5	-	-	-
Australia	2.8	1.2	1.70	6.80	-5.11

Note: Trade weights are by HS6 level import value shares. For members of the European Union (EU), trade weights are based on total EU imports and not the individual EU member states. This table includes the 19 individual countries which are members of the G20. Other members include the EU and the African Union. U.S. trade values are calculated using the WTO definition for agriculture. U.S. free trade agreements (FTAs), including Japan, are highlighted in yellow.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using 2025 World Trade Organization (WTO) tariff profiles and 2026 USDA, Foreign Agricultural Service's Global Agricultural Trade System trade data. Russia's trade weighted MFN applied tariff is from the 2024 WTO tariff profiles, as this statistic was not reported for Russia in the 2025 WTO tariff profiles.

Table 2 also presents the simple average agricultural MFN rate for each country for comparison. It is notable that the largest differences between the two average tariff measures occur for the countries with the highest tariffs. For the United States, however, the choice of measure does not affect the rank order, and the United States and Australia remain the countries with the lowest tariffs.

We also note several patterns when focusing on U.S. agricultural trade flows with each G20 member. First, the largest markets for U.S. agricultural exports are concentrated among G20 members where the United States has a free trade agreement (FTA), as well as with China. This suggests that FTAs are important determinants of the value of agricultural trade. For example, once fully implemented, the United States-Japan trade agreement is estimated to increase U.S. exports of beef and pork to Japan by $413.8 million and $281 million, respectively (Davis et al., 2023; Sabala & Davis, 2023). Second, the United States has an agricultural trade surplus with four of these countries (China, Japan, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia).

Comparing MFN Tariffs by Commodity Group

Next, we analyze average agricultural MFN tariffs applied to imports by WTO commodity group (WTO et al., 2025). Because WTO et al. (2025) does not report trade-weighted MFN tariffs at the commodity level, this analysis relies on simple average MFN tariff rates. Figure 3 graphs both the average foreign import tariffs and U.S. import tariffs for 10 different agricultural commodity groups. The difference in tariff rate is calculated for each commodity group.

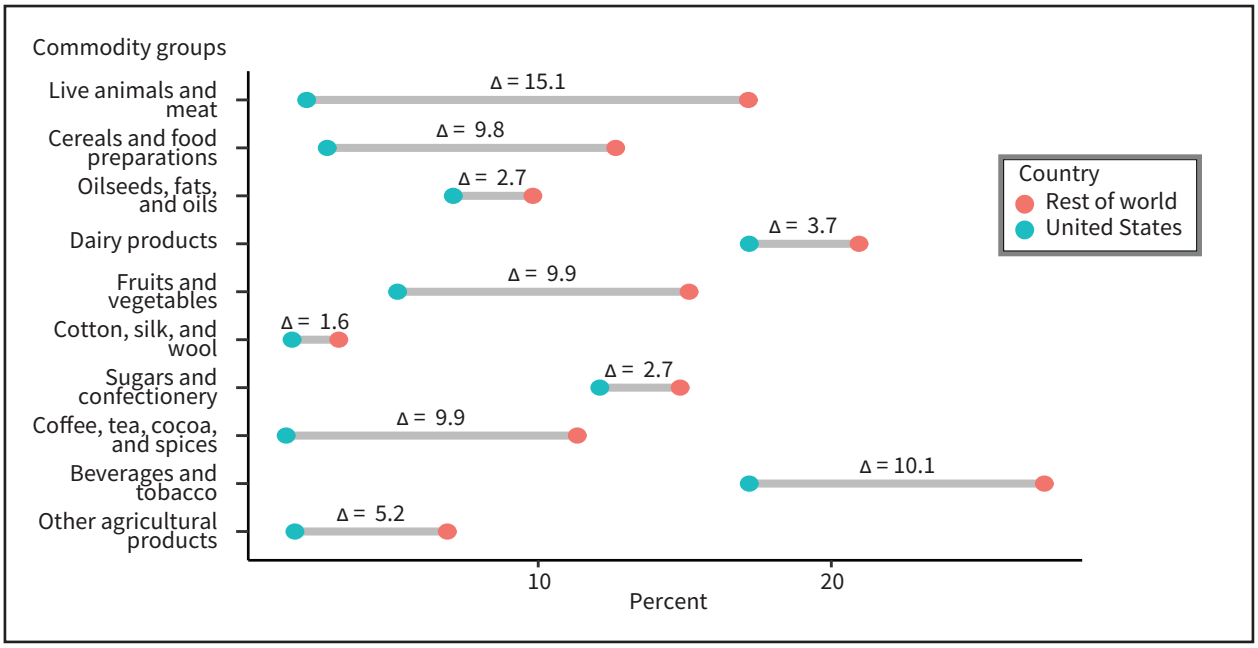
On average, the United States faces higher MFN applied tariffs for all commodity groups around the world compared with what the United States applies to imports (figure 3, panel A). In other words, U.S. agricultural exporters in all 10 commodity groups face MFN tariffs that provide less market access, on average, relative to foreign exporters seeking to sell to the U.S. market.

There are five commodity groups where the difference between average foreign and U.S. tariffs is approximately 10 percentage points. Live animals and meat have the largest difference, where average global MFN tariffs are 15.1 percentage points higher than those the United States imposes. Other commodities with large tariff differences include beverages and tobacco (10.1 percentage points); fruits and vegetables (9.9 percentage points); coffee, tea, and spices (9.9 percentage points); and cereals and food preparations (9.8 percentage points). The smallest differences are for cotton, silk, and wool (1.6 percentage points), oilseeds, fats, and oils (2.7 percentage points); and sugars and confectionery products (2.7 percentage points).

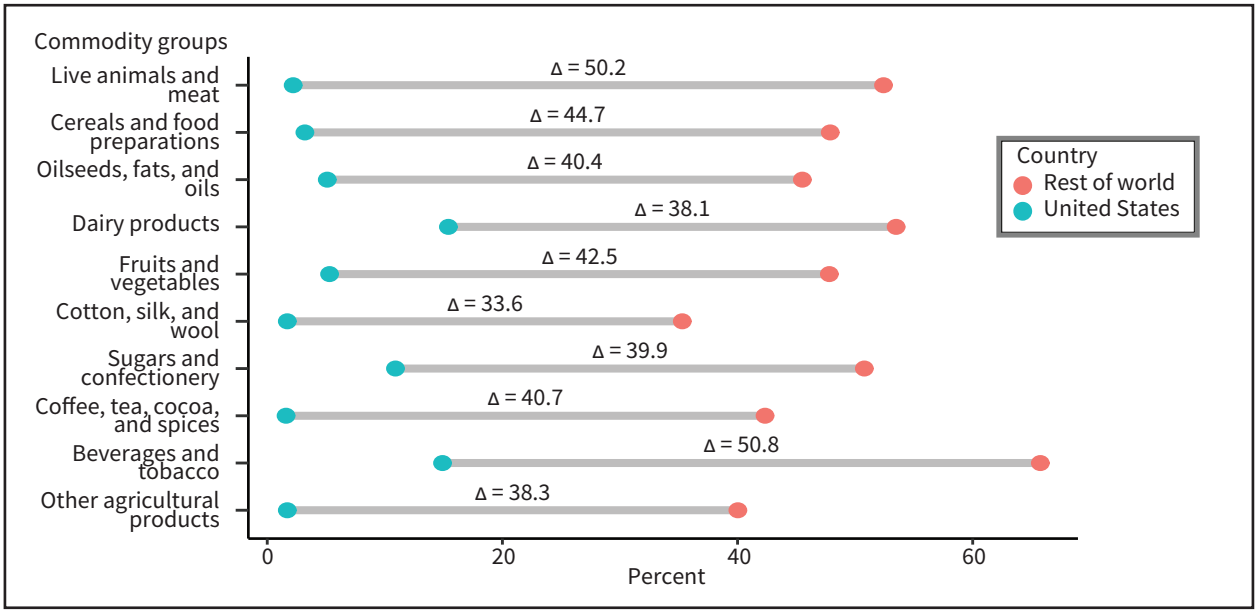
Figure 3

Comparing U.S. and trading partner average import tariffs by commodity

Panel A: Average most favored nation (MFN) applied tariffs



Panel B: Average bound tariffs



Δ = Percentage point difference in average tariff rate between rest of world and the United States.

Note: Calculations do not take into account any existing trade agreements or preferential tariff policies. Unbound tariff lines are excluded from averages. Tariffs bound above 1,000 percent are capped at 1,000 percent.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service calculations using data from 2025 World Trade Organization tariff profiles.

Focusing on average bound tariffs, we observe even larger differences between the United States and the global average for all commodity groups (figure 3, panel B). Here the differences range from 33.6 percentage points for cotton, silk, and wool to 50.8 percentage points for beverages and tobacco products. While it is important to highlight that these bound rates are not the effective rates, they do define the range in which countries can set MFN tariffs under their WTO obligations. This is important when tariffs are conceptualized as strategic interactions between countries. These large differences suggest that, on average, trading partners may have more room to escalate tariffs for these agricultural commodities over current MFN rates compared with the United States.

Next we analyze regional variation in commodity-level MFN differences to better understand variations across major U.S. trading partners. Regional analysis can support new insights for several reasons. First, due to the geographic characteristics of agricultural production, countries within a region often have similar comparative advantages in specific commodity production (i.e., cereals) which may drive their pattern of agricultural exports. This can contribute to having a similar tariff posture. Second, the existence of multilateral agreements or customs unions like the European Union can also result in alignment of external MFN tariffs. This was highlighted in figure 1, where common external tariff polices across EU members resulted in the most frequent trade-weighted average agricultural tariff rates of around 9 percent. Third, specific products may play an important role in diets (e.g., rice) that motivate specific levels of protection.

Figure 4 reports the difference between average foreign MFN tariffs and U.S. MFN tariffs for world regions by commodity group. Here we focus on major world regions but also separate out Canada and Mexico, the two largest trading partners of the United States, for easier comparison of their MFN tariff postures.

These results highlight the wide range of heterogeneity in MFN tariffs applied by foreign trading partners relative to the United States. There are several commodity groups where U.S. exports face higher average MFN tariffs in all regions relative to what the United States imposes on imports. Other Europe's average MFN rate for the live animal and meat trade is, on average, 29.7 percentage points higher than the United States, with smaller differences for Canada (19.4) and Africa (19.4). The region with the smallest difference in live animal and meat tariffs is Oceania, which is 2.6 percentage points higher than the United States, on average. U.S. exports in cereals and food preparations also face higher MFN tariffs than all regions, although the percentage point differences are lower compared with live animals and meats. For example, Asia and Africa exceed U.S. MFN rates at 12.7 and 11.7 percentage points, respectively. In addition to these products, the groups including coffee, tea, cocoa, and spices as well as other agricultural products also exhibit similar patterns of having higher MFN rates than the United States.

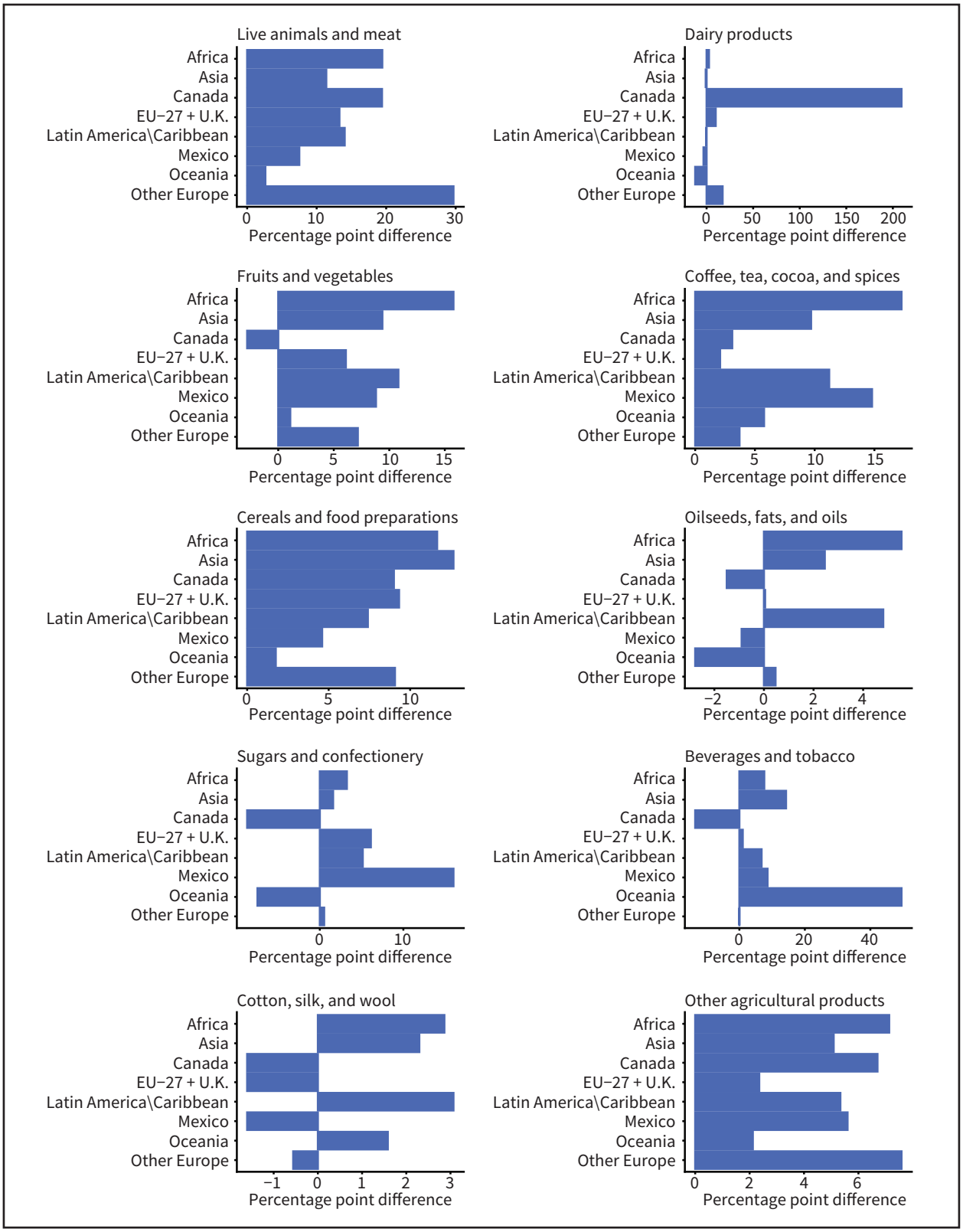
For most commodities, U.S. exporters face a combination of higher and lower MFN rates relative to foreign exporters to the United States. For example, with fruits and vegetables, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean's average MFN tariffs are 15.8 and 10.8 percentage points higher than what the United States applies, respectively. However, Canada's rates are 2.8 percentage points lower than the United States, on average. Similarly, Canada and Oceania also have lower MFN rates for sugars and confectionery products compared to the United States. For several commodity groups, specific regional averages are remarkable for their large tariff differences. In the case of dairy products, Canada's average MFN tariff is more than 200 percentage points higher than the United States and significantly higher than other regional averages. Similarly, Oceania maintains the highest regional MFN rates on beverages and tobacco products.

For two commodity groups, we find evidence that regional MFN tariffs are largely similar to those of the United States. Regional differences from U.S. MFN rates for oilseeds, fats, and oils range from -2.8 percentage points for Oceania to 5.5 percentage points for Africa. The EU-27 plus the United Kingdom (U.K.), Mexico, and Other Europe are all within a percentage point of the U.S. MFN rate.[7] In the cotton, silk, and wool commodity group the range of differences are even smaller, with average rates for Canada, Mexico, and the EU-27 plus the U.K. region 1.6 percentage points lower than the United States and average rates in Latin America and the Caribbean 3.1 percentage points higher.

[7] EU-27 represents the 27 member countries of the European Union: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

Figure 4

Difference between average regional most favored nation (MFN) applied tariff rates and U.S. average by commodity



EU-27 + U.K. = Twenty-seven member countries of the European Union plus the United Kingdom.

Note: Percentage point difference is calculated as the average regional applied MFN tariff rate for imports minus the average U.S. applied MFN tariff rate for imports. Calculations do not take into account any existing trade agreements or preferential tariff policies.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service calculations using data from the 2025 World Trade Organization tariff profiles.

While regional-specific averages across agricultural products provide a broad picture of differences in trade policy vis-à-vis the United States, this view masks commodity-specific differences across countries. To examine such differences, table 3 ranks the top-10 countries in terms of the magnitude of their average MFN-applied tariffs relative to the United States for each of the 10 major agricultural commodity groups. In cases where multiple countries in the top 10 have the same MFN applied rate, all tying countries are listed.

This analysis reveals which countries have the highest MFN applied tariffs relative to the United States by agricultural commodity group. For example, for the live animals and meat commodity group, Turkey has the highest MFN applied tariff rate of all WTO member countries and its rate is 97.8 percentage points higher than that of the United States. Switzerland has a similarly high MFN applied tariff rate on its live animals and meat imports relative to the U.S. rate.

Several countries appear in multiple top-10 lists, including India, South Korea, Uganda, Tanzania, Thailand, and Turkey. For instance, India is among the top-three highest MFN applied tariff rates for each of cereals and food preparations; oilseeds, fats, and oils; sugars and confectionery; coffee, tea, cocoa, and spices; and other agricultural products. Due to its high MFN applied tariff rates, India appears in 9 of 10 of the agricultural commodity groups.

Table 3

Ranking top differences between partner and U.S. average applied most favored nation (MFN) rates by commodity group

Live animals and meat			Cereals and food preparations			Oilseeds, fats, and oils			Dairy products			Fruits and vegetables		
1	Turkey	97.8	1	South Korea	208.9	1	South Korea	38.5	1	Canada	209.3	1	Lebanon	79.9
2	Switzerland	92.7	2	Turkey	40	2	India	34.3	2	Turkey	103	2	South Korea	62
3	Norway	88.4	3	India	32.7	3	Thailand	26.5	3	Switzerland	93.8	3	Tunisia	43
4	Morocco	67.3	4	Tunisia	27.2	4	Venezuela	17.1	4	Norway	78	4	Angola	35.9
5	Iceland	59.8	5	Uganda	23.4	5	Suriname	16.2	5	Iceland	57.4	5	Thailand	33
6	Uganda	41.4	6–7	Burundi, Tanzania	22.2				6	Japan	44.1	6	India	29.1
7	Tunisia	31.9							7	South Korea	40.7	7	Turkey	28.2
8	India	30.7	8	Rwanda	21.5				8	Uganda	33	8	Uganda	26.8
9	Guyana	29.5	9	Chinese Taipei	21.2	6–10	Central African Republic, Congo, Cameroon, Gabon, Chad	15.8	9	Colombia	32.2	9	Dominica	26.7
10	Belize	28.6	10	Japan	20.9				10	Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania	30	10	Kenya, Tanzania	25.3

Cotton, silk, and wool			Sugars and confectionery			Coffee, tea, cocoa, and spices			Beverages and tobacco			Other agricultural products		
1	Bahamas	43.4	1	Turkey	87.4	1	South Korea	51.5	1	Cook Islands	279.7	1	Norway	30.5
2	China	15.6	2	Moldova, Republic of	44.4	2	India	48.9	2	Fiji	209.3	2	Bahamas	29.9
3	Tonga	13.4	3	India	43.6	3	Uganda	31	3	Nauru	74.6	3	India	22.3
4	Zambia	13	4	Kenya	30.3	4	Thailand	30.1	4	Maldives	67.4	4	Iceland	20.2
5	Thailand	9	5	Thailand	28.9				5	India	59.4	5	South Korea	16.7
6	India	8.9	6	Tanzania	28.3				6	Jordan	56.2	6	Tunisia	14.3
			7	Uganda	24.4	5–9	Central African Republic, Congo, Cameroon, Gabon, Chad	28.6	7	Belize	54.8	7	Lebanon	12.4
			8	Dominican Republic	20.8				8	Sri Lanka	51.3			
			9	Panama	20.7				9	Malaysia	48.3			
7–10	Bhutan, Central African Republic, Congo, Cameroon, Gabon, Nauru, South Sudan, Chad	8.4										8–10	Central African Republic, Congo, Cameroon, Gabon, Chad	11.9
			10	Vietnam	18.3	10	Tanzania	26.4	10	Oman	47.5			

Note: The percentage point difference is calculated as the average foreign applied MFN tariff rate for imports minus the average U.S. applied MFN tariff rate. Calculations do not take into account any existing trade agreements or preferential tariff policies.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service calculations using data from the 2025 World Trade Organization tariff profiles.

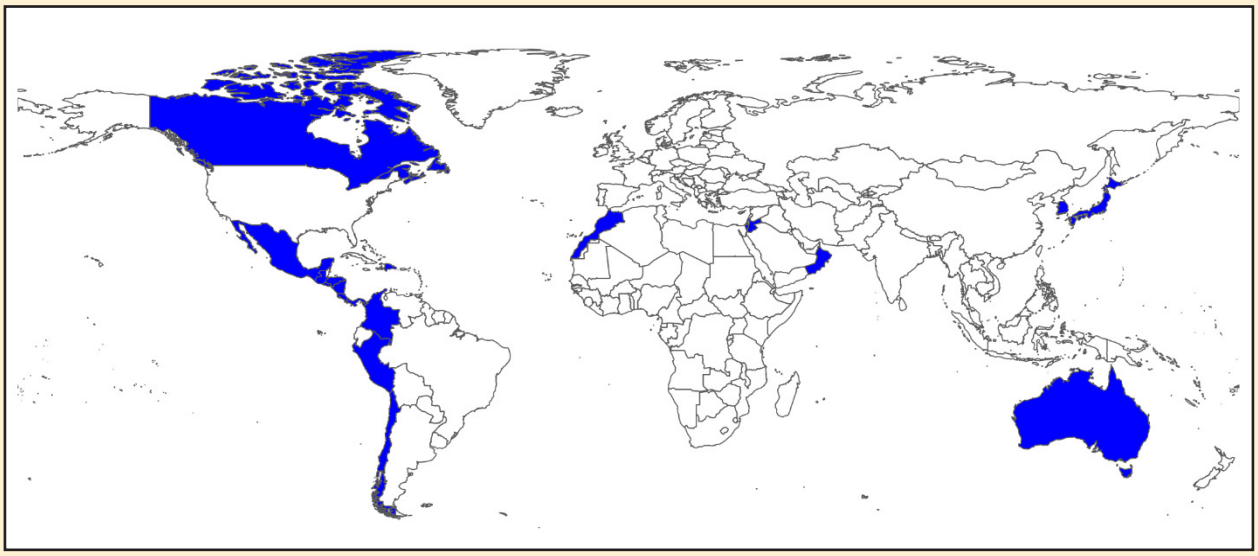
In addition, the rankings in table 3 reveal key outliers across commodity groups. For example, South Korea and Canada have MFN applied tariff rates more than 200 percentage points higher than the United States for cereals and food preparations and dairy products, respectively. Another agricultural commodity group with exceptionally high tariffs is beverages and tobacco, where the Cook Islands and Fiji have MFN applied tariffs more than 200 percentage points higher than the United States. However, due to their small size, these island countries are not major U.S. agricultural trading partners.

It is important to highlight that the United States has FTAs with several countries that can provide U.S. agricultural producers preferential access to foreign markets with otherwise high barriers to agricultural imports. For example, the U.S. FTA with South Korea gave two-thirds of U.S agricultural products immediate duty-free access to South Korea, exempting them from South Korea's high MFN rates, and phased out other import quotas by 2021 (Wong & Manyin, 2024). Since the agreement was implemented, U.S. agricultural exports of beef, prepared foods, and pork had the largest gains, with increases of $1.4 billion, $150 million, and $135 million, respectively (Wong & Manyin, 2024). Because of these FTAs, some U.S. commodity exports may face lower tariff discrepancies than a comparison of applied MFN rates might suggest. At the same time, there may be carveouts within a FTA that exempt specific products from tariff reductions. For example, under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) implemented in 1994, Canada was able to maintain high tariffs on dairy products, including 298 percent on butter (Schaefer & Wolf, 2025). Under the new United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), many of these dairy product TRQs were expanded, giving U.S. exports additional preferential access but still applying the high over-quota MFN rates (U.S. Trade Representative, n.d.; Regmi, 2020). In addition to FTAs, other frameworks such as sectoral agreements may be implemented to work towards similar tariff levels in agricultural trade.

Preferential U.S. Trade Agreements and Programs

In addition to multilateral trade negotiations through the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United States also has negotiated market access and tariff rates through free trade agreements (FTAs). The United States currently has 14 FTAs in force with 20 different countries (box figure). While the United States has not signed any new FTAs since 2012, trends suggest that agricultural trade largely increased for the countries that have FTAs (Ajewole et al., 2022; Padilla et al., 2023). Previous research has investigated the implications of FTAs for U.S. agricultural trade (Wainio et al., 2011; Ajewole et al., 2022).

Box figure 1
U.S free trade agreements



Note: The map highlights the 14 U.S. free trade agreements with the following 20 countries: Israel, Mexico, Canada, Jordan, Chile, Singapore, Australia, Morocco, Bahrain, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Peru, Oman, South Korea, Colombia, and Panama. Additionally, the United States has an agreement with Japan affecting agriculture, which is included in this figure.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using information from U.S. Trade Representative (2025a).

The largest of these agreements is the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which replaced the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in July 2020. After inception, NAFTA phased out most tariffs, including in agriculture, by 2008. The USMCA continues zero tariffs for nearly all agricultural products and provides increased market opportunities for U.S. dairy, poultry, and egg exports to Canada (Zahniser, 2025). Ajewole et al. (2022) discussed and compared tariff rates under different FTAs, highlighting some variation by commodity.

Outside of FTAs, the United States also maintains several other programs that offer preferential trade access to domestic markets. These programs focus primarily on developing countries.

- The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) was established by the Trade Act of 1974 and eliminates tariffs on many products imported from 119 developing countries (U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), 2025b). Eligibility criteria for the program includes free trade provisions, commitments to abide by arbitration for U.S. citizens and corporations, and commitments to worker rights (USTR, 2020).
- The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) was established in 2000 and provides 32 countries with duty-free market access for more than 1,800 products, in addition to GSP access. Eligibility for

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AGOA requires countries make some mutual reductions in barriers to U.S. trade and investment, as well as undertaking other market reforms and initiatives (USTR, 2025b).

- The Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) represents a collection of trade programs first launched in 1983 to provide duty-free market access for most goods and to facilitate the development of Caribbean countries. As of 2025, there are 17 countries participating in some elements of the CBI (USTR, 2025b).
- Establishment of the Nepal Trade Preference Program (NTPP) was directed by the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015 and implemented by Presidential Proclamation in 2016. This program provides preferential market access for some textile and apparel products that were not eligible under the GSP (USTR, 2025b).

Conclusion

Tariffs remain a significant barrier to agricultural trade around the world. While the United States has one of the lowest average agricultural MFN applied tariff rates in the world, there is significant variation across trading partners in the MFN tariffs imposed on different commodity exports. This report examines whether foreign trading partners apply the same or similar average MFN applied tariff rates on agricultural commodity groups as the United States. Overall, this report finds that, on average, the United States has lower average MFN applied agricultural tariffs than more than 90 percent of WTO trading partners.

Focusing on 10 specific agricultural commodity groups, there is substantial commodity-specific variation in MFN applied tariffs. For half of the agricultural commodity groups examined, U.S. exporters face average MFN applied tariffs that are approximately 10 percentage points higher than the U.S. MFN applied rate. Some of the largest average MFN applied tariff imbalances occur in live animals and meat; beverages and tobacco; fruits and vegetables; coffee, tea, cocoa, and spices; and cereals and food preparations. We also find that some commodity groups generally have average MFN applied rates that are similar to the United States, namely cotton, silk, and wool; oilseeds, fats, and oils; and sugars and confectionery products.

In addition to MFN applied tariff rates, large differences between bound rates in the United States and average bound rates for other countries suggest trading partners may have more room for tariff escalation within WTO obligations, relative to the United States. Focusing on country-level differences, we also find that some countries have a pattern of imposing higher MFN tariffs than the United States across multiple commodity groups, including India, South Korea, Uganda, Tanzania, Thailand, and Turkey. FTAs or sectoral trade agreements may provide avenues to achieve more similar tariff levels in agricultural trade.

While this research focuses on bilateral comparisons of WTO MFN tariffs, these rates may only partially capture the ways in which U.S. agricultural exports are disadvantaged by foreign tariffs. The competitiveness of U.S. exports to a foreign market depends not only on the tariff rates imposed on United States, but also on the tariff rates imposed on other foreign competitors to the same market. For example, if other foreign competitors negotiate preferential tariffs to a given market which excludes the United States, then these preferential tariffs may further exacerbate the tariff disadvantage facing U.S. exporters. Such preferential margins, both to the advantage and disadvantage of the United States, are not considered in this analysis of MFN tariff imbalances. Additionally, this report does not analyze differences in nontariff measures which also may disadvantage U.S. exporters.

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Appendix

Table A.1
Countries included in regional groupings

Africa	Asia	EU-27 + U.K.	Latin America and the Caribbean	Oceania	Other Europe
Angola	Afghanistan	Austria	Antigua and Barbuda	Australia	Albania
Benin	Armenia	Belgium	Argentina	Cook Islands	Belarus
Botswana	Azerbaijan	Bulgaria	Bahamas	Fiji	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Burkina Faso	Bahrain, Kingdom of	Croatia	Barbados	Kiribati	Iceland
Burundi	Bangladesh	Cyprus	Belize	Micronesia, Federated States of	Moldova, Republic of
Cabo Verde	Bhutan	Czechia	Bolivia, Plurinational State of	Nauru	Montenegro
Cameroon	Brunei Darussalam	Denmark	Brazil	New Zealand	North Macedonia
Central African Republic	Cambodia	Estonia	Chile	Palau	Norway
Chad	China	Finland	Colombia	Papua New Guinea	Russian Federation
Comoros	Chinese Taipei	France	Costa Rica	Samoa	Serbia
Congo	Georgia	Germany	Cuba	Solomon Islands	Switzerland
Cote d'Ivoire	Hong Kong, China	Greece	Dominica	Tonga	Ukraine
Democratic Republic of the Congo	India	Hungary	Dominican Republic	Vanuatu	
Djibouti	Indonesia	Ireland	Ecuador		
Egypt	Israel	Italy	El Salvador		
Eswatini	Japan	Latvia	Grenada		
Gabon	Jordan	Lithuania	Guatemala		
Ghana	Kazakhstan	Luxembourg	Guyana		
Guinea	Kuwait, the State of	Malta	Haiti		
Guinea-Bissau	Kyrgyz Republic	Netherlands	Honduras		
Kenya	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Poland	Jamaica		
Lesotho	Lebanon	Portugal	Nicaragua		
Liberia	Macao, China	Romania	Panama		
Libya	Malaysia	Slovakia	Paraguay		
Madagascar	Maldives	Slovenia	Peru		
Malawi	Mongolia	Spain	Saint Kitts and Nevis		
Mali	Myanmar	Sweden	Saint Lucia		
Mauritania	Nepal	United Kingdom	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines		
Mauritius	Oman		Suriname		
Morocco	Pakistan		Trinidad and Tobago		
Mozambique	Philippines		Uruguay		

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Africa	Asia	EU-27 + U.K.	Latin America and the Caribbean	Oceania	Other Europe
Namibia	Qatar		Venezuela		
Niger	Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of				
Nigeria	Singapore				
Rwanda	Sri Lanka				
Senegal	South Korea				
Seychelles	Tajikistan				
Sierra Leone	Thailand				
Somalia	Timor-Leste				
South Africa	Turkey				
South Sudan	United Arab Emirates				
Tanzania	Viet Nam				
The Gambia	Yemen				
Togo					
Tunisia					
Uganda					
Zambia					
Zimbabwe					

EU-27 + U.K. = The 27 member countries of the European Union plus the United Kingdom.

Note: The United States, Canada, and Mexico are also included in this analysis but are analyzed as separate regions.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using 2025 World Trade Organization (WTO) tariff profiles.