



Deglobalization and Food Sovereignty

*Nituparna Sahoo

M.Sc. Scholar, Department of Agriculture Economics,

Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology, Bhubaneswar, Odisha-751003, India

*Corresponding Author's email: sahoo.nituparna@gmail.com

For decades, the global food system was built on the pillars of efficiency and comparative advantage. However, recent shocks—from the 2022–2024 supply chain disruptions to the protectionist trade policies observed in 2025—have exposed the fragility of this hyper-globalized model. This article explores the economic shift toward deglobalization and the rising demand for food sovereignty. It analyzes how nations are moving away from international reliance and toward "resilient localism," evaluating whether this shift provides a sustainable economic future or merely introduces new costs into the global grocery basket.

Introduction

The End of the "Always-Available" Era

We have long lived in a world where seasonality was a relic of the past. If it was winter in Paris, strawberries arrived from Chile. This global dance was orchestrated by low-cost logistics and open borders. But as of 2026, the music has changed. Rising geopolitical tensions, carbon border taxes, and a desire for national security have triggered a "Great Uncoupling." Recent estimates from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) suggest that nearly 30% of global grain trade is currently affected by geopolitical conflicts, pushing governments to ask a critical question: "Can we feed ourselves if the ships stop moving?" (FAO, 2025).

The Economic Driver: From Efficiency to Resilience

In traditional agricultural economics, the goal was efficiency—growing what your land is best at and trading for the rest. However, this created "single points of failure." The OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook (2025-2034) highlights that while global markets remain vital, there is an increasing move toward "strategic autonomy" as nations grapple with price volatility and climate shocks.

Deglobalization in agriculture is now viewed as an economic insurance policy.

Governments are investing in:

Reshoring Supply Chains: Bringing fertilizer production and seed processing back within domestic borders. According to the IMF (2024), while reshoring can lead to a 4.5% loss in long-term global GDP due to reduced specialization, many nations view this as a necessary cost for stability.

Buffer Stocks: Moving from "just-in-time" delivery to "just-in-case" storage of grains and essential oils to mitigate "tariff shocks."

Defining the Shift: Food Security vs. Food Sovereignty

While often used interchangeably, the two concepts are economically distinct (Keske, 2021; Akter, 2022):

Food Security: Focuses on access to food, regardless of origin. It is market-oriented and supported by organizations like the World Bank and IMF.

Food Sovereignty: Focuses on the power of people and states to control their own food systems. It prioritizes local producers over international agribusiness and is championed by movements like La Via Campesina.

The Cost of Coming Home: There is no "free lunch" in deglobalization. While food sovereignty increases resilience, it introduces new economic pressures:

Labor Gaps: As nations limit migration, the agricultural labor gap—estimated at over 2 million jobs globally—is forcing a capital-intensive pivot to Agricultural Robotics (FAO, 2025).

Input Inflation: Producing nitrogen fertilizer locally using green hydrogen is more sustainable but currently carries a higher price tag than importing fossil-fuel-based inputs from low-cost nations.

Conclusion

A Hybrid Future: The era of radical globalization is fading, but total isolation is not the answer. The most successful agricultural economies in the coming decade will be those that practice "Strategic Autonomy." This involves protecting core food staples through local sovereignty while maintaining global trade for non-essential variety. For the modern farmer, the shift means a transition from being a "commodity price taker" to a "resilience provider."

References

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