

Category	: International Rice Research Conference
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Keyword 1	: Land markets and policies
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Keyword 3	: Rice supply, demand, and trade
Title of Entry	: The political economy of policy exceptionalism during economic transition: the case of rice policy in Vietnam
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Select only one type of presentation	: 15 minute oral presentation

Abstract : Rice is an important component in the global food security agenda. However, prevailing economic analysis suggests that rice policy globally is often damaging and not economically efficient, rendering food security as a goal highly vulnerable to volatility in the world rice market. This paper explores the case of Vietnam's rice policy as a key rice exporter, a country that has developed highly distinctive policy settings to manage the inherent tensions between 'socialist' policy legacies and 'market-based' objectives during an economy-wide liberalisation process. In open economy political terms, our case study facilitates the exploration of two key issues. First, how well the OECD-centric concept of agricultural policy exceptionalism works in a developing country context. Second, how the policy may succeed politically even in the face of what appear to be severe political constraints from external economic pressures. The paper develops a narrative of the political economy of rice policy in Vietnam during the Renovation (Doi Moi) period from 1986 to the present. We find, first, that the policy trajectory in Vietnam's rice sector runs counter to recent claims about post-exceptionalism in agriculture; that is, rice policy has resisted pressures to comply fully with market rules despite Vietnam's accession to the World Trade Organization. Second, the interaction of economic liberalisation processes and the ruling Communist Party's political survival strategy results in policy settings that fail standards of policy coherence or are economically inefficient, albeit remain stable and reform-resistant over time.

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