

Abstract:

The aim had been to sum up the present market access situation of the Hungarian fruit and vegetable sector and the possible changes due to the EU accession. We concentrated on two main issues: the trends of Hungarian foreign trade and the barriers (tariffs) of market access. The complexity of the market access issues required detailed calculations, on the Hungarian and the EU tariff level for the most important import and export products and we also calculated complete tariff protection level, using the trade weighing scheme. The last eight years (1996-2003) of the Hungarian fruit and vegetable foreign trade may be characterized by unstable/stagnating export and continuously increasing import. In case of the import coming from the EU countries even before the accession there had been trade outside the quotas with tariff preferences thus it was profitable to sell these vegetables and fruits on the Hungarian market even after paying the tariffs outside the quota. After the EU accession the diminishing rest of tariffs and quotas may add to the other causes of import increase from the member countries of the EU-15. Hungary has considerable import volume of dried and processed vegetables from the nine new member states (CEE-91). Dried vegetables already enjoy preferential free access from these countries so we do not presume significant changes due to the accession but in case of the processed vegetables the average level of diminishing tariffs may motivate the presently stagnating/slightly growing import. Third countries have the highest import ratio in case of dried vegetables and these are exactly those products where the most significant tariff level change will take place due to our accession. The protection level against third country import in case of three fresh fruits (lemon, orange, mandarin) will increase significantly due to our accession. This may further decrease our third country trade and increase the import from the EU-15 or those countries which have preferential agreements with the EU.