

The Role of Cotton in Burkina Faso's Economy and the Structural Effects of Globalization on Smallholder Producers

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Abstract

This article explored the importance and economic place of cotton in Burkina Faso, and the many effects of globalization on the country's traditional cotton producers. Cotton production has historically been Burkina Faso's main agricultural export and the heart of the country's economy, representing an essential source of income for thousands of rural households. We used a systematic review of the literature and relied on Carbaugh's (2018) theoretical framework of globalization. This study analyzes not only the institutional structure of the cotton industry, but also the export economy and the dynamics of international trade. The results show that, while globalization has opened up new international markets for Burkinabe cotton, it has also exposed producers to high price volatility, abusive trade practices and technological shortcomings, such as the failure to adopt genetically modified Bt cotton.

Keywords

Agricultural Sustainability, Bt Cotton, Burkina Faso, Cotton Industry, Global Trade Dynamics

1. Introduction

Cotton has constituted a cornerstone of Burkina Faso's rural economy, first as a strategic crop under colonial extraction and later as a flagship of post-independence agricultural development. As of 2022, the cotton sector directly supports over 2 million livelihoods and contributes approximately 18% of national export reve-

nues (World Bank, 2022; SOFITEX, 2022). Long considered one of sub-Saharan Africa's leading cotton producers, Burkina Faso has built a structurally export-dependent agricultural model in which cotton remains a primary source of foreign exchange, employment, and rural economic identity.

Yet, this reliance has rendered the country's agricultural economy acutely vulnerable to global market forces, including volatile international prices, donor-driven trade liberalization, and asymmetric competition from heavily subsidized producers in the Global North. These structural pressures have not only undermined the profitability and autonomy of smallholder farmers but also entrenched new forms of economic dependency, despite the apparent benefits of market integration. This study contends that globalization has functioned as a double-edged process: on the one hand, facilitating institutional modernization and export expansion; on the other, reinforcing postcolonial patterns of peripheralization and value extraction.

To interrogate these contradictions, the paper adopts an analytical framework grounded in three interrelated lenses. First, Carbaugh's (2018) conceptualization of globalization, which emphasizes the interplay between trade interdependence and structural vulnerability in developing countries. Second, Dependency Theory, which theorizes how peripheral nations are systematically subordinated within global capitalist systems. Third, Unequal Exchange Theory, which reveals the persistent transfer of surplus value from Global South producers to Global North markets through distorted terms of trade. Taken together, these frameworks illuminate Burkina Faso's integration into the global cotton value chain as a process shaped less by comparative advantage than by historical asymmetries and institutional constraints.

This study is positioned within a growing body of literature examining the intersection of cotton production, technological change, and global trade dynamics in Burkina Faso. For instance, Kaminski et al. (2011) questioned the sustainability of the country's cotton reforms; Dowd-Urbe (2014, 2020) critically assessed the socio-political implications of Bt cotton deployment and withdrawal; while Engels (2021, 2022) explored the internal class configurations and forms of peasant resistance emerging in response to neoliberal restructuring. Building on these contributions, this paper offers a theoretically informed synthesis that highlights both macroeconomic dependencies and the micro-level constraints faced by producers.

The principal analytical objectives of this study are twofold:

- 1) to critically assess the role of cotton production and export within Burkina Faso's broader political economy; and,
- 2) to examine how global trade regimes, technological interventions, and donor-driven policy reforms have structurally affected the autonomy, profitability, and resilience of the country's smallholder cotton producers.

By conducting a narrative review of peer-reviewed literature, institutional reports, and economic databases from 2010 to 2024, the study seeks to generate policy-relevant insights and propose both national and community-level strategies for

fostering greater equity, sustainability, and agency in Burkina Faso's cotton sector.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a narrative literature review to examine the economic significance of cotton in Burkina Faso and to assess how globalization structurally affects the country's smallholder cotton producers. A narrative approach was selected due to the interdisciplinary and exploratory nature of the research, which intersects the fields of agricultural economics, international trade, development studies, and postcolonial political economy. Unlike systematic reviews, which emphasize exhaustive source collection, the narrative method enables a contextualized and theory-driven synthesis of the most relevant and credible insights on the topic.

A total of 15 documents were reviewed, spanning peer-reviewed academic journals, institutional reports, and official economic databases. This limited yet curated corpus was deliberately chosen based on three main criteria: 1) source credibility and academic rigor; 2) direct relevance to Burkina Faso's cotton economy and its exposure to global trade mechanisms; and 3) alignment with theoretical frameworks used to analyze economic dependency and asymmetries in global agricultural systems. Sources were identified using advanced searches on Google Scholar, as well as repositories from recognized organizations such as the World Bank, FAO, SOFITEX, Oxfam, and Alliance for Science. Keywords included: "cotton export Burkina Faso", "globalization in agriculture", "subsidized cotton", "Bt cotton Burkina Faso", and "agricultural trade dependency". The review covers the period from 2010 to 2024, allowing for longitudinal insights into both pre- and post-Bt cotton dynamics, including recent institutional and geopolitical developments affecting the sector.

This review is anchored in a theoretical framework combining Carbaugh's (2018) conceptualization of globalization with two structural paradigms: Dependency Theory and Unequal Exchange Theory. These frameworks provide a critical lens through which to interpret Burkina Faso's integration into the global cotton value chain—not simply as a case of market expansion, but as a process shaped by power asymmetries, technological dependency, and structural vulnerability to external shocks. This is particularly pertinent considering Burkina Faso's withdrawal from Bt cotton in 2016, which many scholars interpret as a manifestation of contested development trajectories (Dowd-Uribe, 2020; Engels, 2022).

Given the nature of the research, no primary data collection was involved, and no human subjects were recruited. As a result, this study did not require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

The literature review was guided by two central research questions:

- 1) What role does cotton production and export play in Burkina Faso's national economy?
- 2) How has globalization structurally affected the profitability, resilience, and autonomy of cotton production among smallholder farmers?

The findings derived from this review are presented in the sections that follow.

They are organized to reflect both macroeconomic contributions of the cotton sector and the micro-level impacts experienced by producers navigating the pressures of global agricultural trade.

3. Findings

3.1. Organization of the Cotton Industry in Burkina Faso

The government of Burkina Faso organizes the cotton sector. SOFITEX (Societe des Fibres Textiles) is a state-controlled entity that organizes the production and export of cotton in Burkina Faso. The entity was founded in 1979 “as a joint venture of the Burkinabè government and the French state-owned cotton company, Compagnie Française pour le Développement des Fibres Textiles (CFDT)” (Engels, 2022).

SOFITEX produces and distributes seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides to farmers; it is also responsible for the “purchase, transport, ginning, and sale of the grains and fibers” (Engels, 2022). The price of cotton is set by SOFITEX before the beginning of the rainy season (Engels, 2022). This practice has not always met the approval of farmers and has resulted in protests and the boycott of cotton production in 2018. Consequently, cotton production dropped by 29 percent in 2018–2019 (Engels, 2022). The dissatisfaction of cotton producers due to the feeling of not being included in decisions that affect their living conditions is a direct cause of the decline in cotton production. This proved that urgent efforts for more inclusive dialogues and transparency were needed in the cotton industry.

Annual production of cotton in Burkina Faso, expressed in thousands of metric tons. The sharp drop in 2018 reflects major producer boycotts and sectoral governance tensions. Source: Author’s compilation based on national agricultural data.

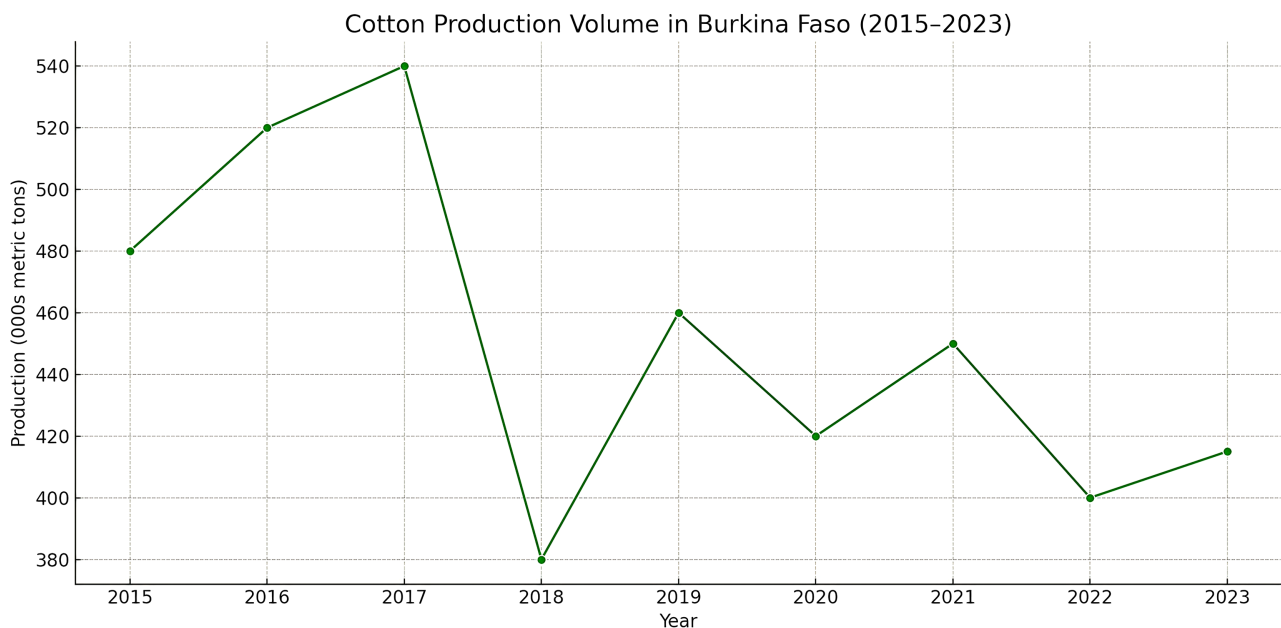


Figure 1. Cotton production volume in Burkina Faso (2015–2023).

As shown in **Figure 1**, Burkina Faso suffered a marked decline in cotton production in 2018, from over 540,000 tons to around 380,000 metric tons. This decline coincided with producer boycotts in response to SOFITEX's vertically imposed price-fixing system and lack of participatory governance (Engels, 2022). In the years that followed, production continued to fluctuate, illustrating the institutional instability of the sector and the more general susceptibility of small producers to poor governance at national level and global constraints.

In the late 1990s, the UNPCB (Union Nationale des Producteurs de Coton du Burkina Faso) was established by some large producers and SOFITEX as a peaceful corporation to negotiate with the government and help build the capacity of farmers. The establishment of UNPCB provided an opportunity for farmers to have a unified voice for effective advocacy for the benefit of producers.

3.2. Share of Cotton Production and Export in the Economy of Burkina Faso

Agriculture has been central to the economic growth of Burkina Faso. The sector employs around 80 percent of the population, according to a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), authored by Vitale (2018). Also, a report by the World Bank in 2015 indicated that agriculture contributed 25 percent to the country's GDP (World Bank, 2015), thus constituting the top export of Burkina Faso. However, gold exports have recently overtaken cotton as the primary export, contributing \$7.18 billion to the country's economy in 2023 (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2023). In the same year, cotton contributed only \$262 million, making it the second top export of Burkina Faso.

Despite the shift in the country's economy, with mining being the primary contributor to its GDP, it is worth noting that the cotton sector remains the main crop in agriculture. On the global market, Burkina Faso is among the top 10 exporters of cotton (Vitale, 2018). The country is the first African producer of cotton. The cotton sector alone constitutes the primary source of income for approximately three million people in rural areas in Burkina Faso (SOFITEX, 2022). These represent about 14 percent of the country's population, which was estimated at 21.5 million in 2021 (World Bank, 2022). The instability of cotton in terms of production represents an economic problem, but also a social problem. *The Guardian* (2023) reports that in areas where cotton was once a stable livelihood, many young people are turning to gold mining or have even been recruited into armed groups driven by economic despair. The challenges caused by SOFITEX and the government of Burkina Faso to cotton producers are exacerbated by globalization.

Comparison of export revenues from cotton and gold in Burkina Faso, in millions of dollars (USD). The data shows a sharp and consistent rise in gold exports, overtaking cotton by a wide margin. Source: Author's compilation based on national trade statistics.

As shown in **Figure 2**, gold has progressively overtaken cotton as Burkina Faso's top export commodity. In 2015, Cotton was in the lead with an export value ap-

proaching \$270 million. By 2023, however, foreign sales of gold had risen sharply to \$7.18 billion, far outstripping those of cotton, which stood at just \$262 million. **Figure 1** graphically presents this widening differential, which highlights the shift in economic priorities and vulnerability of the cotton sector within the global market structure.

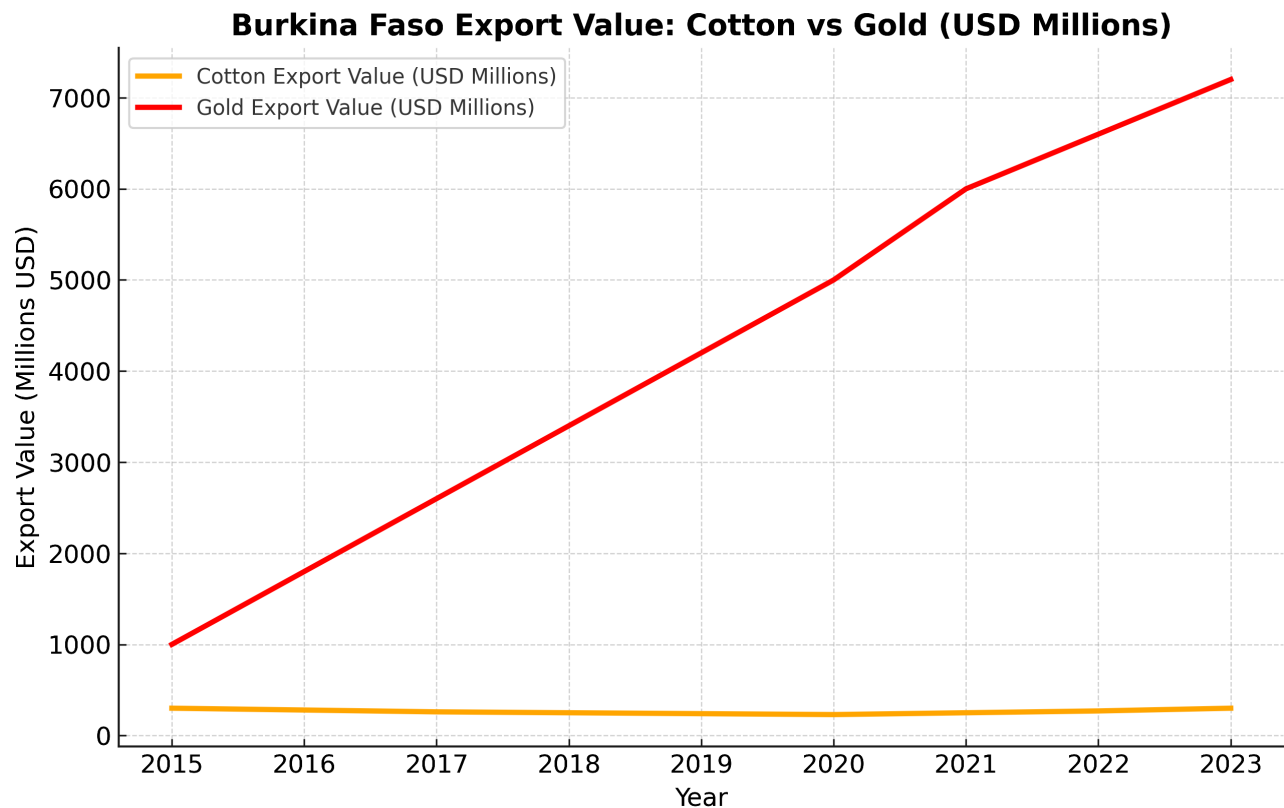


Figure 2. Export value of cotton and gold in Burkina Faso (2015-2023).

3.3. Impacts of Globalization on Cotton Producers in Burkina Faso

Carbaugh (2018) defined globalization as “the process of greater interdependence among countries and their citizens. It consists of the increased interaction of product and resource markets across nations via trade, immigration, and foreign investment.” Simply put, the globalization of the economy consists of an open market on the global stage with limited to zero trade barriers in the forms of tariffs, quotas, etc. Globalization can have both benefits and drawbacks. Certain economists argue that economic growth depends on the level of openness of a market. Others contend that globalization can jeopardize a local economy because of some troubles initiated overseas. The cotton sector in Burkina Faso was mostly shaped by Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) that were imposed by the World Bank and the IMF in the 1990s. These reforms helped liberalize agricultural markets and reduce the state support for farmers, which led cotton producers to be more vulnerable to fluctuations in international prices (World Bank, 2011)

In the case of the cotton sector in Burkina Faso, globalization has profoundly influenced both opportunities and challenges for the cotton producers. On the one hand, thanks to globalization, Burkina Faso and its cotton producers have gained access to international markets and buyers, mainly in Asia and Europe, thanks to its membership in organizations such as the WTO. At the regional level, Burkina Faso's accession to ECOWAS and WAEMU has created a favorable environment for trade integration. However, some critics argue that these policies have done little to protect cotton producers from global market inequalities (Engels, 2021). On the other hand, cotton producers in Burkina Faso have experienced a wide variety of challenges due to the effects of globalization. Firstly, on the global markets, the Burkinabè cotton competes with countries such as the U.S., China, and Brazil, to name but a few (Hauchart, 2010). This is made difficult due to unfair competitors such as the U.S. and China, as they provide massive subsidies to their producers. For instance, the U.S. "subsidizes its [...] cotton producers by more than 50 percent of the product purchase price" (Hauchart, 2010, p. 59). These massive subsidies by large economies such as the U.S. and China make it difficult for unsubsidized cotton producers of Burkina Faso to compete with their international counterparts. As a result, cotton producers in Burkina Faso usually receive prices that are lower than the cost of production, negatively affecting their living conditions. Despite the fact that China has become an important and sometimes even the most important economic partner for many African nations, including Burkina Faso, its investments are largely concentrated on the farm and often avoid the processing of raw materials such as cotton. This shows us the uneven benefits of global engagement, where trade relations deepen at the expense of local value chains that remain underdeveloped (Brautigam, 2020).

"They promised we would sell more. But when our cotton was rejected for low quality, we had no recourse."

—A cotton farmer from Koudougou, as cited in Engels (2022).

Comparative evolution of global and Burkinabè cotton prices (USD per pound). The data reveal a persistent price gap, with Burkinabè producers receiving consistently lower compensation. The widening differential during global price surges underscores Burkina Faso's limited bargaining power and structural constraints in global trade. Source: Author's compilation based on World Bank and national pricing data.

As illustrated in **Figure 3**, Burkinabè cotton producers consistently receive lower prices than the global average, with gaps reaching up to \$0.25 per pound. Despite a significant rise in global cotton prices between 2020 and 2022, local producer prices lagged behind. This phenomenon really highlights Burkina Faso's weak negotiation power in the global marketplace and validates critiques of unfair trade structures (Hauchart, 2010). The important price drop in 2018 also coincides with widespread protests against SOFITEX's price-setting mechanism (Engels, 2022), reflecting the disconnect between producer realities and the state-led market regulation.

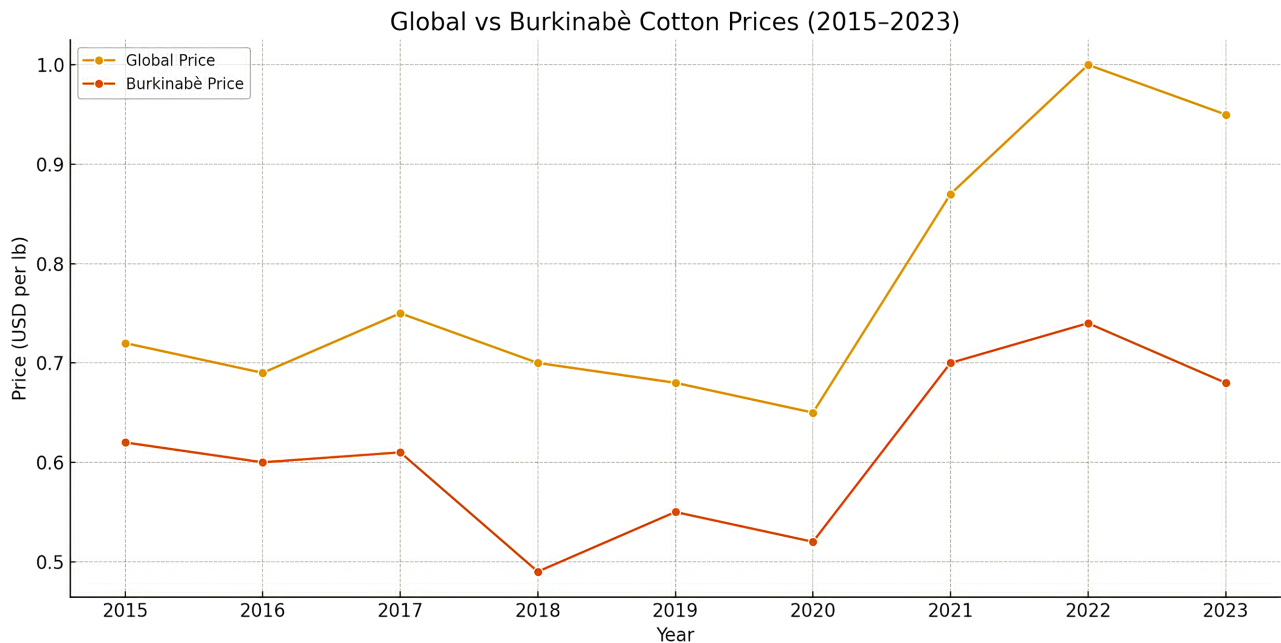


Figure 3. Global vs. Burkinabè cotton prices (2015–2023).

A 2022 report by Engels mentions the frustrations of Burkinabè cotton farmers over their exclusion from price-setting decisions. One producer, quoted anonymously in a union survey, stated:

“We work all year round, but the price is fixed without our input. It’s like we are laborers on someone else’s land.”

This sentiment is widespread among smallholder producers who feel disempowered within the state-controlled SOFITEX system.

The Union Nationale des Producteurs de Coton du Burkina Faso (UNPCB) has long advocated for greater inclusion of farmers in key decision-making processes. According to Kaminski et al. (2011), cooperative structures have been instrumental in mediating disputes and pushing for more transparent negotiations, but their influence remains limited by broader political and economic constraints.

Also, it is important to note that the export of raw cotton does not add significant value to the country’s economy and producers’ lives.

“We need to process cotton here, not just export it raw. That’s the only way we can win.”

—Farmer delegate to UNPCB, 2021.

In the early 2000s, the cotton sector was going through a crisis related to boycotts and lower cotton prices on the global market. Bt cotton, a genetically modified cotton, was introduced in the country after a partnership between Burkina Faso and Monsanto was signed to alleviate the crisis and increase productivity—the genetically modified cotton required fewer treatments. However, the introduction of that species did not yield the expected outcomes. It resulted in shorter fiber staples, furthermore lowering export prices. In the beginning, Bt cotton was warmly welcomed as a great technological solution that would reduce pesticide

use and improve the yields. However, the promise was short-lived. Farmers interviewed by Dowd-Urbe (2020) and Gakpo (2018) expressed regret over the crop's shorter fibers and the subsequent fall in export prices, resulting in financial losses. In 2016, the country abandoned Bt cotton, indicating the risks of embracing international technologies that are not adapted to local realities (Dowd-Urbe, 2014).

“The withdrawal of Bt cotton in 2016 was not merely a policy shift—it represented the loss of a perceived promise. Many farmers felt misled. According to Dowd-Urbe (2020), one farmer explained, “They said it would make our lives easier. But in the end, we lost both quality and income.”

As outlined in Table 1, the introduction and eventual abandonment of Bt cotton in Burkina Faso marks a key episode in the interaction between the country and the global biotech firms. Even if the initial adoption led to some productivity gains, it ultimately reduced quality of the fiber and the export prices, which eventually culminated in a national withdrawal of the technology in 2016. This outcome highlights the risks of adopting foreign technologies that are not tailored to the local, ecological and the economic realities of the country.

Table 1. Timeline of Bt cotton in Burkina Faso.

Year	Event	Impact Summary
2003	Partnership with Monsanto announced	Initiated GMO trials to boost productivity
2008	Full adoption of Bt Cotton	Bt cotton became widespread; initially reduced pesticide use
2016	Abandonment of Bt Cotton	Withdrawn due to short fiber issues and reduced export prices

Additionally, in the interviews conducted by Dowd-Urbe (2014), many farmers have expressed concern that they were “not properly informed” before the introduction of Bt cotton, and that their feedback during trials was ignored. One participant noted:

“They said it would make our lives easier. But in the end, we lost both quality and income.”

The voices of the farmers underline the importance of local agencies in technological and trade decisions, which has often been overlooked in top-down policy interventions.

Economic volatility is another challenge that cotton producers in Burkina Faso face due to globalization. Volatile prices on the international market, caused by speculations in trading and imbalances in supply and demand, have led to income instability for cotton producers in Burkina Faso (Kaminski et al., 2011). These challenges clearly show that although globalization opens markets, it can be a burden to small-scale cotton producers in developing countries such as Burkina Faso. Much of this volatility is driven by speculation in global futures markets, where

large commodity traders hedge cotton prices in ways that often distort actual market value. As a result, local producers in Burkina Faso face unpredictable income streams that are disconnected from their production quality or volume (Kaminski et al., 2011).

4. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a persistent paradox: while cotton remains a socio-economic cornerstone of Burkina Faso's rural economy, globalization has simultaneously reinforced systemic vulnerabilities for smallholder producers. These vulnerabilities are not merely incidental but structurally embedded in the configuration of global trade, technology diffusion, and institutional governance. The Burkinabè cotton sector thus serves as a microcosm of the broader dilemmas faced by primary commodity exporters in the Global South.

From a theoretical perspective, this situation aligns closely with Dependency Theory, which argues that the global economic system is structured in a way that sustains the dominance of developed "core" economies while constraining the autonomy of "peripheral" countries. Burkina Faso's continued reliance on the export of raw, unprocessed cotton—without the parallel development of a robust domestic transformation sector—mirrors colonial-era patterns of extraction. High-value stages of the cotton value chain, such as spinning, weaving, and branding remain concentrated in wealthier nations, while Burkinabè producers operate at the low end of the chain, capturing only marginal returns. This structural positioning severely limits the country's ability to accumulate capital, industrialize, or assert greater agency in international trade negotiations.

In parallel, Unequal Exchange Theory helps explain how Burkina Faso's integration into global cotton markets operates under the guise of liberal competition while concealing stark asymmetries. Cotton producers in the United States and China benefit from billions of dollars in government subsidies, allowing them to export at artificially low prices. These trade-distorting practices depress global prices and erode the competitiveness of unsubsidized producers in countries like Burkina Faso. Despite long-standing efforts by the Cotton-4 coalition at the World Trade Organization (WTO), substantive progress on agricultural subsidy reform remains limited, perpetuating inequities and undermining the principles of a fair and rule-based trading system.

The issue is further compounded by the volatility of global cotton prices, which introduces financial uncertainty and planning difficulties for smallholder farmers. As highlighted by the World Bank (2011) and Oxfam (2020), fluctuations are increasingly driven not just by supply-demand fundamentals but also by speculative activity on international commodity markets. Burkinabè farmers, who lack access to hedging instruments or price insurance mechanisms, are left fully exposed to these shocks, leading to unstable incomes, rising indebtedness, and deepened rural precarity.

The interpretation of globalization offered by Carbaugh (2018) provides a use-

ful analytical lens to understand these dynamics. He posits that while globalization fosters greater economic interdependence, it often amplifies vulnerability in peripheral economies. This is particularly evident in the adoption of Bt cotton in Burkina Faso. While genetically modified cotton initially promised increased yields and pest resistance, its long-term outcomes were more ambivalent. Technology introduced new dependencies on multinational seed companies, increased production costs, and generated ecological and social backlash, leading to its eventual suspension (Dowd-Uribe, 2014, 2020). This episode underscores how technology transfers—when implemented without adequate local adaptation—can exacerbate rather than alleviate structural dependence.

The sharp decline in cotton production observed in 2018 exemplifies how these structural tensions manifest in practice. While many analysts point to coordinated producer boycotts as a principal driver—motivated by dissatisfaction with the management of Bt cotton and declining fiber quality—it is essential to acknowledge the multifactorial nature of the crisis. Climatic variability, pest resurgence following the phase-out of Bt cotton, and delays in input distribution likely interacted with producer resistance to produce the steep drop in output. A holistic understanding of this episode reinforces the broader argument that systemic fragility in the sector stems from both internal governance gaps and external structural pressures.

Institutionally, although reforms such as the partial liberalization of the cotton sector and the emergence of farmer cooperatives have been implemented, the asymmetries of power within domestic value chains remain entrenched. SOFITEX, the state-controlled cotton company, continues to dominate pricing decisions, export logistics, and contract negotiations, often without sufficient producer input. This top-down governance model has fostered mistrust among stakeholders and limited the scope for inclusive development. The marginal participation of producers in decision-making processes restricts innovation, discourages investment in quality upgrades, and weakens long-term sustainability.

In sum, the Burkinabè cotton sector illustrates the ambiguous outcomes of globalization in a structurally constrained context. Market integration has not translated into equitable development; access to technology has not resulted in greater autonomy; and institutional reforms have yet to dismantle inherited hierarchies of power. Addressing these contradictions requires not only technical solutions but also structural policy reforms and global trade rebalancing that prioritize fairness, inclusivity, and long-term resilience over short-term efficiency and extractive growth.

5. Conclusion and Implications for Farmers and Policy Makers

This study reaffirms that cotton remains a vital pillar of Burkina Faso's rural economy, generating over \$262 million in export revenue in 2023 and sustaining the livelihoods of more than two million people. Despite this centrality, the sector remains structurally exposed to the vulnerabilities of globalization—particularly price

volatility, trade asymmetries, and technological dependency. While integration into international markets has offered some opportunities—such as improved infrastructure and institutional reformism has also entrenched patterns of external dependence and limited the capacity of smallholder producers to retain value from their labor.

The analysis demonstrates that Burkina Faso's participation in the global cotton economy is fundamentally shaped by unequal power dynamics. Producers in the Global North benefit from trade-distorting subsidies and technological advantages, while Burkinabè farmers operate under conditions of low profitability and limited influence over price-setting mechanisms. These inequities are embedded in the architecture of international trade, which continues to reproduce postcolonial asymmetries, restricting structural transformation in countries reliant on raw material exports.

In response to these challenges, a multi-level strategy for reform is essential. At the international level, Burkina Faso should intensify its diplomatic engagement within the Cotton-4 coalition—alongside Mali, Chad, and Benin—to advocate for substantive reform at the World Trade Organization (WTO). This includes calling for the elimination of trade-distorting domestic support under Article 6 and Annex 2 of the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) and pressing for the full implementation of the Development Component of the Cotton Initiative (TN/AG/GEN/34/Rev.4). Moreover, strategic alliances within the G-90 and G-33 blocs could help amplify the voices of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in multilateral negotiations and promote a fairer global trade system.

Nationally, the Burkinabè government should prioritize value chain upgrading by investing in local cotton transformation industries—spinning, weaving, and textile manufacturing—to retain more economic value domestically. Establishing minimum price guarantees or stabilization funds would mitigate the effects of global price fluctuations on smallholder incomes, while carefully designed targeted subsidies—compliant with WTO rules—could promote more sustainable and equitable production practices. Institutional reforms are also necessary: increasing transparency and democratic governance within SOFITEX and ensuring that farmers have a meaningful voice in pricing and decision-making processes, would rebuild trust and improve sectoral outcomes.

At the community level, strengthening producer cooperatives remains a critical mechanism for enhancing rural agencies. Cooperative structures not only improve bargaining power in national markets, but also enable participation in fair trade certification schemes, regional marketing initiatives, and international advocacy campaigns. By fostering collective action and knowledge sharing, cooperatives can also contribute to more resilient and inclusive agricultural systems.

Ultimately, the case of Burkina Faso illustrates broader challenges confronting commodity-dependent economies in the Global South. It highlights the urgent need to shift away from extractive export models toward a vision of sovereign, equitable, and climate-resilient agriculture that empowers local producers and re-

distributes value more justly across global supply chains.

Further research is needed to assess comparative trajectories across other cotton-exporting countries such as Benin, Mali, or Ethiopia. Such analyses could help identify the policy combinations most effective in reducing dependency, enhancing resilience, and increasing local value capture. In addition, longitudinal studies on the ecological and socio-economic impacts of Bt cotton phase-out in Burkina Faso would provide valuable insights into the sustainability of current production models. Finally, exploring alternative trade frameworks—such as regional textile integration, pan-African value chains, or blockchain-based traceability systems—may open up new pathways for structural transformation and producer empowerment in the context of a rapidly evolving global economy.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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