

Foreword

Trade facilitation as a policy response to boost country's trade performance and reap the benefits of trade liberalization is still in a nascent stage in India. Nevertheless, ever since World Trade Organization (WTO) members concluded their negotiation on the Trade Facilitation Agreement in Bali in December 2013, there has been a growing academic literature on trade facilitation covering a wider range of issues. Most studies focused on initiatives taken and/or to be taken by developing countries at the macro level, rather than explaining how specific policy initiatives pertaining to specific sectors can be used towards meeting the objectives of trade facilitation and also in achieving an overall economic development. This is largely because differences in problems faced by and the requirements across the exporting sectors have not been acknowledged in the trade facilitation framework. It is in this background that these issues have been examined by Dr Malini L Tantri by considering the case of India's Special Economic Zones (SEZs) policy, as SEZs are reportedly known as the leading export sector of the country. Analysis indicates that the new SEZ policy has undoubtedly initiated the first step towards identifying and statutorily mandating a few provisions required to reduce the timeline and transaction costs involved in trade. The study also finds that the conventional SEZs are in a better position compared to the new generation SEZs in matters of trading facilities, given their closer proximity to Development Commissioner's office, customs authorities and other trade facilitating agencies. The significance of the study lies in its quest for providing a holistic appraisal of the various unexplored issues in the literature pertaining to trade facilitation and SEZs in India and suggesting appropriate policy directives. I congratulate the author on bringing out the monograph which has significant value both in terms of understanding the issues and policy implications. I am sure this monograph will be widely used both in research and policymaking.

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